

# FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN ART

A. K. COOMARASWAMY  
(Themes & Concepts)

Vol. I



Being Volume—I of A. K. Coomaraswamy's monumental 4-volume Series entitled : FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN ART, it is devoted to Themes & Concepts of Indian Art and, as such, contains his classic monographs on basic issues. Art is *Māyā* and visualisation as prescribed by *Śukra-Nīti-Sāra*, is its process; it is not a photographic representation of Nature, which 'realism' would reduce it to a Science. In Indian Art, we are concerned with the IDEA (of *divinity* and *beauty*) behind the FORM, rather than the imitation of that Form. 'Idealism' and 'Symbolism' is its approach and it is sacred on this count. Art is an 'intellectual' rather than a 'manual' act and this is how it is distinguished from *craft*. Thus he deals with the Philosophy of Indian Art and Aesthetics in the subtlest details with reference to its *raison d'être* and lays foundations of this study in the right earnest. The Introduction will help the reader to understand Coomaraswamy.

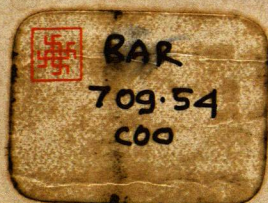
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Introduction by  
S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM





**COOMARASWAMY 4-VOLUME SERIES**

# **Fundamentals of Indian Art**

**A. K. COOMARASWAMY**



**Vol I**

**(Themes & Concepts)**

**INTRODUCTION**

**by**

**S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM**



**The Historical Research Documentation Programme**

**JAIPUR**

**1985**



Indira Gandhi National  
Centre for the Arts





# FUNDAMENTALS OF

## INTRODUCTION

by

S. Durai Raja Singam





ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY

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FIRST EDITION

A. K. COOMARASWAMY

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( Themes & Concepts )



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**Dedicated**

**To**

**Dr. S. Durai Raja Singam**

**His Sincerest Biographer**





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# INTRODUCTION



Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born on 22nd August 1877 at Colombo in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). His father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy (1834-79),\* a barrister by profession, was also a scholar. Ananda lost his father before he was two, and he was brought up in England by his English mother who lived for another 63 years and died in 1942.

He lived in England for about a quarter of a century. He was educated first at Wycliff College at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire and later at the University of London. Initially, he was interested in Sciences, particularly in Geology and Mineralogy and, in fact, he began his career as a geologist. At 22, he contributed a paper on 'Ceylon Rocks and Graphite' to the **Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society**, London. He was appointed Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon when he was only 25. A few years later, his work earned him the degree of D. Sc. (Doctor of Science) from the University of London.

The decline of the native arts and crafts due to the impact of Industrialism moved him. Native cultures and handicrafts, in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and India, were threatened with extermination by the proselytising fury of occidental civilization, and Coomaraswamy took up their cause. His interests in physical sciences were, thus, gradually switched on to Philosophy and Art.

For thirty years from 1917 until 1947 (the year of his death), he worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U. S. A.) and built up its unique Indian Art Gallery. Not only did he collect, but he also interpreted the art-objects in his own classical style and it was this way that he laid foundations of Indian Art History. Moved by an unlimited thirst for Knowledge (*Jijñāsā*) which he saw as '*philosophia-perennis*' and with such personal equipment as an indefatigable spirit and untiring devotion to work, the day-in and the day-out, and

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\* Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, F. R. G. S., F. G. S., son of Arumugam Coomaraswamy Pillai, Mudaliyar, was born in Colombo, Ceylon on 23rd January 1834. He was educated at Queens College Colombo, where he won the Turnour Prize for the best student in 1851. He was admitted an advocate of the Supreme Court of Ceylon in 1856 and a Member of the Lincoln's Inn on 10th July 1862. He was called to the English Bar on 26th January 1863, which was remarkable "by reason of his being the first person admitted a Barrister of our Inns of Court who was neither Christian nor Jew". He was knighted on 11th August 1874. In 1875, he married Elizabeth Clay Beeby, elder daughter of William John Beeby of Hertfordshire. He was Member of the Legislative Council of Ceylon from 1861 till he died on 4th May 1879. Some of his most prominent works are: **Arichandra** (1863); **Dathvansa** (1874); **Sutu Nipata** (1874); **Tayumanavar** (edited and published by S. Durai Raja Singam, 1877).



perseverance which baffled physical limitations, he created a vast literature on cultures and arts.

Thus constantly devoted to study and writing for 30 years, he has authored nearly 600 monumental works including 40 books and more than 500 articles (Research-papers), some of the latter too being a monograph each, sometimes covering as many as 56 printed pages.\* He was, in fact, a **Ṛṣi** (Sage) who dedicated himself to the study of Indian Culture, precisely Art which is the former's subtlest expression.

It is surprising that in such a vast volume and great quantity of his work, he has given us the most substantial, in fact, the fundamental and foundational data of this study. Every writing of Coomaraswamy is marked with characteristic precision, accuracy and mathematical brevity. Within a space of a few pages, he would write what any other scholar would cover in a book. Thus '**Ābhāsa**' or '**Aesthetic of the Śukra-Nīti-Sāra**' for example, is a monograph each. He would not write anything for which he could not cite textual reference by chapter and verse. His compact, condensed narrative often presented a forbidden mosaic on the printed pages, 'offering nothing in the way of enticement to slothful contemporary eyes', but challenging attention none-the-less because of its rigorous exactitude, like that of a mathematical demonstration. Not infrequently, matter that would suffice for a whole article was compressed into a footnote. But even when he was thus writing for scholars, it was certainly not only for scholars; and when expressly for those who are not scholars, he could write very simply, relegating footnotes to concluding pages where the reader can ignore them if he so desires.

**His statements are, in fact, Sūtras (dicta) which are meant for universal application and Time has not been able to disprove them.**

From geology to archaeology and thence to all the arts and expressions, from the humblest to the highest aspirations of all mankind, his was a 'myriad-minded' intellect. Ranging from philology in a dozen languages to music and iconography, and from the most ancient metaphysics to the most contemporary problems in politics, sociology and anthropology, his researches became

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\* A Comprehensive Bibliography of his works on Art History entitled : '**ART-ANANDICA**' by R. Nath and S. Durai Raja Singam is soon to be published. His excellent monograph which was originally published as an article has already been brought out under the title : '**SYMBOLISM OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE**' (The Skambha and the Stupa) by the Historical Research Documentation Programme Post Box No. 319, Jaipur (1983). This figure does not include his reviews, letters, notes and rejoinders which also number about 500.



universal and all-embracing, leading essentially to the rediscovery of the truth and enumeration of the principles by which cultures rise and fall.

He is best in his treatment of Indian Art. He is the greatest exponent of the **traditional philosophy of art**—the doctrines exemplified in the artefacts that have come down to us from the Middle Ages and the Orient. Unlike the Modern Art, the arts of the great timeless tradition move ever from within outward, and are never concerned merely with the idealization of objective fact. He was a spokesman of tradition and for him '**disinterested aesthetic contemplation**' was a contradiction in terms, and nonsense. The purpose of art has always been, and still should be, effective communication. What can the works of art communicate? "Let us tell the painful truth," Coomaraswamy explains, "that most of these works are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society!" ...To understand and appreciate the art of any PEOPLE, one must become united with it in spirit; one must have learnt to feel and understand the '**cosmos**' as they have felt and understood it—never approaching them with condescension or contempt, or even with the sort of 'objectivity' that, while it may succeed in depicting, always fails to interpret their works.

He had no love for modern art with what he called its narcissistic exhibitionism and magpie aestheticism (snatching up bits of coloured ribbon with which to decorate its nest). 'The manufacture of 'art' in studios, coupled with the artless facture of the things that are made in factories, represented to him a reduction of the standard of living to sub-human levels. The coincidence of beauty and utility, significance and aptitude, must determine all human values.' Thus did Coomaraswamy define Art :-

"Art is primarily an intellectual act; it is the conception of FORM, corresponding to an idea in the mind of the artist. It is not when he observes nature with curiosity, but when the intellect is self-poised, that the forms of art are conceived. .... What we mean by 'original' is 'coming from its source within', like water from a spring. The artist can only express what is in him, what he is. It makes no difference whether or not the same thing has been expressed a thousand times before. There can be no property in ideas. The individual does not make them, but finds them; let him only see to it that he really takes possession of them, and his work will be original in the same sense that the recurrent seasons, sunrise and sunset are ever new although in the name the same. The highest purpose of Christian and Eastern art alike is to reveal that one and the same principle of life that is manifested in all variety. Only modern art, reflecting modern interests, pursues variety for its own sake and ignores the sameness on



which it depends....Indian artist, although a person, is not a personality; his personal idiosyncrasy is at the most a part of his equipment, and never the occasion of his art. All of the greatest Indian works are anonymous, and all that we know of the lives of Indian artists in any field could be printed in a tract of a dozen pages."

This is how Coomaraswamy analysed the philosophy and spirit of Indian Art :

"In India, it (ART) is the statement of a racial experience, and serves the purposes of life, like daily bread. Indian art has always been produced in response to a demand : that kind of idealism which would glorify the artist who pursues a personal ideal of beauty and strives to express himself, and suffers or perishes for lack of patronage, would appear to Indian thought far more ridiculous or pitiable than heroic. The modern world, with its glorification of personality, produces works of genius and works of mediocrity following the peculiarities of individual artists : **in India, the virtue or defect of any work is the virtue or defect of the race in that age.** ... All Indian art has been produced by professional craftsmen following traditions handed down by pupillary succession. Originality and novelty are never intentional. Changes in form, distinguishing the art of one age from that of another, reflect the necessities of current theology and not the invention of genius : changes in quality reflect the varying, but not deliberately varied, changes in racial psychology, vitality and taste... In India, the same qualities pervade all works of any given period, from pottery to architecture, and all are equally expressive : the smallest fragment of a textile portrays the same as the most elaborate temple. In other words, there are no distinctions of fine and applied or decorative art and no unsurmountable barrier dividing the arts of the folk from the canonical arts. Indian art has always an intelligible meaning and a definite purpose. An 'art for art's sake', a 'fine' or useless art, if it could have been imagined, would only have been regarded as a monstrous product of human vanity. The modern 'fine' or useless arts are unrelated to life and speak in riddles and hence the utter impossibility of inculcating a 'love of art' in the people at large. **A race producing great art, however, does so, not by its 'love of art', but by its love of life.** In India, where no one discussed art (there is no Sanskrit equivalent for the modern concept of 'art'), where none but philosophers discussed the theory of beauty, and where sculptures and paintings were regarded not as 'works of art' but as means to definite ends there, art was an integral quality inhering in all activities, entertained by all in their daily environment, and produced by all in proportion to the vitality (not the kind) of their activity."



Coomaraswamy never studied Indian Art in isolation but always in the context of, and in relation to, the '*cognate Western Asiatic culture*' on which this art has substantially drawn. Thus he noted :-

"The study of Indo-Sumerian antiquities is still in its infancy, and it is too early to draw far-reaching conclusions. But it is at least probable that the civilization of which we have now obtained this first glimpse was developed in the Indus Valley itself and was as distinctive of that region as the civilization of the Pharaohs was distinctive of the Nile; and if the Sumerians, as is generally supposed, represent an intrusive element in Mesopotamia, 'then the possibility is clearly suggested of India proving ultimately to be the cradle of their civilization, which in its turn lay at the root of Babylonian, Assyrian and Western Asiatic Culture generally.'....And in fact a great variety of motifs found in Maurya, Sunga and early Andhra art, and thus antedating the age of Hellenistic influence, present a *Western Asiatic* appearance suggesting parallels in Sumerian, Hittite, Assyrian, Mykenean, Cretan, Trojan, Lykian, Phoenician, Achaemenid and Scythian cultures. ... The effect of these considerations is to withdraw India from its isolation, as a background to the existing art, there is a 'common early Asiatic Art, which has left its uttermost ripple marks alike on the shores of Hellas, the extreme west of Ireland, Etruria, Phoenicia, Egypt, India and China.' All that belongs to this phase of art is equally the common inheritance of Europe and Asia, and its various forms as they occur in India or elsewhere at various periods up to the present day are to be regarded as **cognates rather than as borrowings.**"

His standpoints were racial consciousness, national spirit and cultural susceptibilities. He never thought from a narrow, regional point of view but always took up a broad and wide canvas, ethnic and geographical, to paint. Thus, when he takes to study Indian Art, he has before him the map of the whole Orient (Eurasia-Africa), precisely, from the Nile through Tigris-Euphrates-Oxus to Indus-Ganges-Brahmaputra, a period of five millenniums, the movement of different races-and the growth of different cultures out of these factors. This provides a thorough historical background and context to his theories-a solid bedrock to his work. This is how he pioneered the study of Indian Art History and laid its foundations.

Coomaraswamy's statements on various phases and aspects of Indian Art would be immensely enlightening and useful and a few are given below.

### **Coomaraswamy on Sculptural Aestheticism**

It has been remarked of Mauryan and Sunga art by Sir John Marshall that the sculptor was still bound by the law of frontality (i. e. considering the



composition from only one point of view) and that 'the MEMORY PICTURE' had not yet given place to direct observation of nature.' The first remark is obviously true as a fact of technical procedure: the second involves a certain misinterpretation of Indian aesthetic psychology and deserves a longer discussion. The memory picture-or rather, a synthetic image based on past experience-is from first to last the essential foundation of Indian art: we cannot recognize here any such innate striving towards realism as that which becomes apparent, soon after the primitive developments, in Greek and Christian art. The Indian method is always one of visualization-unconscious in primitive, systematized in the mature art. Indian art is always a language employing symbols, valid only by tradition and convention. The symbol may be little more than a geometrical design, as in the case of the lotus rosette denoting miraculous birth, or anthropomorphic as in the later Nativities, where *Māyā Devī* is represented as a woman, either with or without the infant Bodhisattva. In both cases equally, there is definite and comprehensible statement; but the form of the statement is always that of the art language of the day (we may illustrate this by pointing out that perspective representation is a part of the art language of our own times, while it does not by itself make modern art superior to ancient art); and this language is never one, of 'direct observation of nature'. It is true that a tendency to realism is evident in the *Gāndhāra* sculptures, but there it is of western origin, and it does not prevail in Indian or Chinese art which preserve the formulae alone, and not the intention of Greco-Buddhist sculpture. On the other hand, we do recognize in Indian art of certain periods and miss at other times a certain virtuous and moving, indeed an essential, quality which is often spoken of as true to Nature: the development of this truth we describe as progress, the loss of it as decadence, but it must not be confused with the assimilation of the symbol to natural appearance, which, by itself, is a technical and not an aesthetic progress. The point to be made is that this truth is not the result of observation (of models) but of feeling (empathy, *Sādhāraṇa*, with reference to the artist in the first instance, rather than the critic). If we are impressed by the truth of a movement in sculpture or painting, this means, not that the craftsman has *observed* the movement (however familiar he may be with it in daily life) but that at the time of the conception and execution of his work, he has *felt* the corresponding tensions in his own flesh. The 'awkwardness' then, of primitive art is that of undeveloped consciousness (self-awareness), progress, the evidence of increasing consciousness, and decadence of apathy. It is in this way that a nation's art reveals the various stages of its spiritual history. Technical perfection, on the other hand, is a matter of knowledge and skill, rather than of vitality: aesthetically neither good nor bad, it need not and often does not coincide with the *perfection of art*.



## Coomaraswamy on Gupta Art

The Gupta period is the golden age of India. Images and temples appropriate to each of the persuasions of Hinduism appear in profusion, and determine the leading forms of all later imagery and architecture. Iconography and the theory of music and dancing are codified. In the art of the Gupta period all earlier tendencies converge: an identical quality appears not only in art of diverse sectarian application, but in the art of every province, from the Himalayas to Ceylon. We no longer meet, with primitive qualities or 'naivete' in Indian art—its character is self-possessed, urbane, at once exuberant and formal. All foreign influences have been absorbed and Indianised. There is no divergence of feeling between doctrine and expression—it has come to be understood that the forms and experiences of finite life are revelations of the infinite: in this age, we can truly say that the five senses are the chief inlets of the soul. Philosophy and faith possess a common language in this art that is at once abstract and sensuous, reserved and passionate. Earlier Indian art is, so to speak, a product of nature, rather than of artifice, and characterised by naturalism and simplicity. **Gupta art is the flower of an established tradition, a polished and perfected medium, like the Sanskrit language, for the statement of thought and feeling:** and having thus become an ordered language with a grammar and vocabulary of its own, its forms are by hypothesis conventional ('agreed upon') and ideal—its truth of utterance does not depend upon, though it may include, a visual resemblance to natural forms.

## Coomaraswamy on Natarāja

One of the most familiar forms of Indian Art in our museums is that of Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, whose creative and destructive fettering and liberating operation is conceived in terms of thesis and antithesis of a dance, of which the incessance is the manifestation of his sustaining power. From this cosmic dance all other activities, operations and dances are so to speak, experts to the extent of its perfection, every performance 'participates' in the divine operation, the principles of dancing are not of human invention, but have been revealed, and have been transmitted from generation to generation in pupillary succession. The standard of excellence is not one of pleasure that may be felt by a given audience, but one of correctness, just as for Plato the irregularity of human motions is to be corrected by an assimilation to cosmic rhythm. An educated audience is pre-supposed, one that will be pleased by whatever is correct in the performance, and displeased conversely. It is in the same way that the mathematician judges of the beauty of an equation.



The Nataraja type is *one of the great creations of Indian Art*, a perfect-visual image of Becoming adequate and complement and contrast to the Buddha type of pure being. As remarked by Kramrisch, its finest realisations exhibit a "sinnlich reifste Körperlichkeit voll plastischer Bewegung mit geometrischer Allgemeingültigkeit verschmolzen". The movement of the dancing figure is so admirably balanced that while it fills all space, it seems nevertheless to be at rest, in the sense that a spinning top or a gyrostat is at rest; thus realising the unity and simultaneity of the Five Activities (Pancakrtya, viz. Production, Maintenance, Destruction, Embodiment and Release) which the symbolism specifically designates. Apparently the type appeared in the *Cola* period; it is now very widely distributed in the South, in innumerable examples still in *pūja*.

### Coomaraswamy on Rajput Painting

Rajput painting is the painting of Rajputana and Bundelkhand, and the Panjab Himalayas. The known examples ranging from the latter part of the 16th into the 19th century fall into two main groups, a Rajasthani (Rajputana and Bundelkhand) and a Pahari.....It is important to understand the relation of Rajput to Mughal painting. Pure types of either can be distinguished at a glance, usually by their themes, always by their style. Thus Mughal painting, like the contemporary Memoirs of Great Mughals, reflects an interest that is exclusively in persons and events; is essentially an art of portraiture and chronicle. The attitude even of the painters to their work is personal; the names of at least a hundred Mughal painters are known from their signatures, while of Rajput painters it would be hard to mention the names of half a dozen, and I know of only two signed and dated examples. Mughal painting is academic, dramatic, objective and eclectic; Rajput painting is essentially an aristocratic folk art, appealing to classes alike, static, lyrical, and inconceivable apart from the life it reflects. After Akbar, Mughal painting is almost devoid of any poetical background; Rajput painting, on the other hand, illustrates every phase of Medieval Hindi literature, and indeed, its themes cannot be understood without a thorough knowledge of the Indian epics, the Kṛṣṇa-Līlā literature, music and erotics. Technically and stylistically the differences are equally clear, most of all perhaps when Mughal painting deals with Hindu themes, as in the Razm-Nāmah and Rasikapriyā. Apart from the illustration of manuscripts, in direct continuation of Persian tradition, Mughal painting is essentially an art of miniature painting, and when enlarged, becomes an easel picture. Indian Manuscript illustrations are very rare, and in a totally different tradition and Rajput painting enlarged becomes a mural fresco, historically, indeed is a reduced wall painting. Mughal painting uses soft



tonalities and atmospheric effects. Rajput colour suggests enamel or stained glass, and while it may be used to establish the planes, is never blended to produce effects. Mughal outline is precise and patient, Rajput interrupted and allusive or fluent and definitive, but always swift and facile. Relief effect is sought and obtained in Mughal painting by means of shading, and Rembrandt-like chiaroscuro is often introduced; Rajput colour is always flat, and a night scene is lighted as evenly as one in full sunlight, the conditions being indicated by accessories (such as candles or torches) rather than represented. **Thus, in spirit, Mughal painting is modern, Rajput still medieval.**

### Coomaraswamy on Rāga-Mālā Paintings

The greatest interest attaches to the 16th and early 17th century Rajasthani paintings, which are almost invariably sets of pictures illustrating Rāga-Mālās poems describing the thirtysix or sometimes more, musical modes, the rāgas and rāginīs. The paintings, like the poems which they illustrate, represent situations of which the emotional colouring corresponds to the feeling or burden of the musical mode. The time of day or night, time of year and state of the weather appropriate to the mode are also indicated in the paintings. The compositions for particular modes are generally constant; thus **Bhairavī** is always represented by a group of women worshipping at a Śiva shrine, **Asāvarī** by a female snake—charmer, **Toḍī** by a woman with **vīṇā**, to the sound of which the wild deer are attracted, **Deśākhyā** by an acrobatic performance, and so forth. The poem for the Madhu-Mādhavī Rāginī refers to the pleasant rumbling of the thunder in the monsoon clouds, presaging rain, exciting the peacocks and, in like manner, the princess who longs to rest again in her absent husband's arms. Illustrations in the same style to **Bāramāsā** poems are much rarer. The constancy of the compositions, as well as the character of the art, make it evident that we are recovering here, just as in the case of the illustrations to the Jaina manuscripts, the formulae of an old and well established tradition. Amongst such formulae may be cited as examples, the manner of representing clouds, rain and lightening, the representation of hills as conical eminences usually built up of smaller elements, covered with flowers and grasses, and the manner of differentiating between day and night by a variation of the background, without change in the illumination. A first glance at these paintings will suffice to convince the observer that they belong, and could only belong, to a pure Indian tradition: they are totally unlike Persian art of any period.

### Coomaraswamy on Medieval Indian Art

The medieval period was essentially an age of devotion, learning and



chivalry; the patronage of art and literature moving together as a matter of course...The Islamic Art added something real and valuable to that of India; and finally, though only for a short time, under the Great Mughals in the 16th and 17th centuries, there developed in India a new kind of life which found expression in a magnificent architecture and a great school of painting. Just because of its more HUMANISTIC and worldly preoccupations, this art is better known to and better appreciated by Europeans at the present day than is the more profound art of Hindu India. Everyone has heard of the Taj Mahal, a wonder of inlaid marble built by Shah Jehan to be the tomb of a beloved wife; everyone can easily understand and, therefore, admire the Mughal paintings that provide us with a faithful portrait gallery of all the great men of Northern India during a period of two centuries. This is a kind of art that really corresponds to that of the late Renaissance, with all its personal, historic and romantic interests.

The Mughal art, like the Mughal emperors, gradually became a definitely Indian thing; not, however, at all like the Rajput paintings, but realistic in method and personal and historical in interests. It excels in portraiture; and authentic likenesses of all the great men of the time, including the Mughal emperors themselves, are still in existence. Later, and particularly in the 18th century, there is much closer assimilation to Hindu art, so far as subject-matter is concerned; but the *rāginīs* and *nāyikās* are treated by Mughal painters as material for art and not in the Hindu way, in all seriousness and for their own sake.

### **Coomaraswamy on the Impact of British Rule on Indian Art**

His analysis of the impact of the British rule and the dawn of the so-called Industrial age on India and Indian Art is as important and enlightening as is his enumeration of the Gupta period, the former representing the decadence, and the latter the zenith of Indian art. He noted that the European influence on Indian Art has been almost purely destructive : in the first place, by undermining the bases of patronage, removing by default the traditional responsibilities of wealth of learning. Secondly, the impact of industrialism, similarly undermining the status of the responsible craftsman, has left the consumer at the mercy of the profiteer and no better off than he is in Europe. Thirdly, by the introduction of new style and fashions, imposed by the prestige of power, which the Indian people have not been in a position to resist. A reaction against these influences is taking place at the present day, but can never replace what has been lost; India has been profoundly impoverished, intellectually as well as economically, within the last hundred years.



For these basic dicta (Sūtras), Coomaraswamy is indispensable for study and research on any aspect of Indian Art : Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Iconography, Bronze, Terracotta etc; in this discipline it is not possible to begin without him.

The aim of comparison in cultural studies is to develop reciprocal or reverse perceptions. This is precisely what Coomaraswamy does in his *Dance of Śiva Essays*. Throughout, Coomaraswamy's Thesis is that India's contribution, its expression as a culture, is its philosophy and its arts. Life in India is art : its cultural stress points to self-realisation through the enduring categories of Indian Civilization : architecture, music, handicrafts, popular and classic literature and schools of philosophy.

Once a friend of mine, a distinguished anthropologist, Dr W. Wilder remarked to me, saying, "Theme is one special characteristic which ought to distinguish Coomaraswamy from other cultural historians of his age." It is his comparativism, his insistence on knowing the standards of other cultures. It is an attitude which anthropologists are now familiar with, but in the early years of this century when the comparative method was only just emerging from its philological beginnings, it was mark of high originality. Indian civilization was benefitted as much as any from this new perspective and in Coomaraswamy's work we may see a good example of its application.

Some of Coomaraswamy's observations have lately given rise to doubts and amendments. Quite a few remarks are aimed at Coomaraswamy, some right and some wrong, obviously finding him misleading. And yet, his pioneer work is today being continued by connoisseurs, artists, private collectors, museum curators and scholars. He was the one single scholar to whom, more than to any body else, the world owes its understanding of INDIAN ART.

**S. Durai Raja Singam**









# The Aims of Indian Art\*

The extant remains of Indian art cover a period of more than two thousand years. During this time many schools of thought have flourished and decayed, invaders of many races have poured into India and contributed to the infinite variety of her intellectual resources; countless dynasties have ruled and passed away; and so we do not wonder that many varieties of artistic expression remain, to record for us, in a language of their own, something of the ideas and the ideals of many peoples, their hopes and fears, their faith and their desire. But just as through all Indian schools of thought there runs like a golden thread the fundamental idealism of the Upanishads, the Vedānta, so in all Indian art there is a unity that underlies all its bewildering variety. This unifying principle is here also Idealism, and this must of necessity have been so, for the synthesis of Indian thought is one, not many.

What, after all, is the secret of Indian greatness? Not a dogma nor a book; but the great open secret that all knowledge and all truth are absolute and infinite, waiting not to be created, but to be found; the secret of the infinite superiority of intuition, the method of direct perception, over the intellect, regarded as a mere organ of discrimination. There is about us a storehouse of the As-Yet-Unknown, infinite and inexhaustible; but to this wisdom, the way of access is not through intellectual activity. The intuition that reaches to it we call Imagination and Genius. It came to Sir Isaac Newton when he saw the apple fall, and there flashed across his brain the Law of Gravity. It came to the Buddha as he sat through the silent night in meditation, and hour by hour all things became apparent to him; he knew the exact circumstances of all beings that have ever been in the endless and infinite worlds; at the twentieth hour he received the divine insight by which he saw all things within the space of the infinite *sakvalas* as clearly as if they were close at hand; then came still deeper insight, and he perceived the cause of sorrow and the path of knowledge, "He reached at last the exhaustless source of

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truth". The same is true of all "revelation"; the Veda (*śruti*) the eternal *Logos*, "breathed forth by Brahman", in whom it survives the destruction and creation of the Universe, is "seen", or "heard", not made, by its human authors . . . The reality of such perception is witnessed to by every man within himself upon rare occasions and on an infinitely smaller scale. It is the inspiration of the poet. It is at once the vision of the artist, and the imagination of the natural philosopher.

## Art and Science

There is a close analogy between the aims of art and of science. Descriptive science is, of course, concerned only with the record of appearances; but art and theoretical science have much in common. The imagination is required for both; both illustrate that natural tendency to seek the one in the many, to formulate natural laws, which is expressed in the saying that the human mind functions naturally towards unity. The aim of the trained scientific or artistic imagination is to conceive (*concipio*, lay hold of) invent (*invenio*, to light upon) or imagine (visualise) some unifying truth previously unsuspected or forgotten. The theory of evolution or of electrons or atoms; the rapid discovery (un-veiling) by a mathematical genius of the answer to an abstruse calculation; the conception that flashes into the artist's mind, all these represent some true vision of the Idea underlying phenomenal experience, some message from the "exhaustless source of truth". Ideal art is thus rather a spiritual discovery than a creation. It differs from science in its concern primarily with subjective things, things as they are for us, rather than in themselves. But both art and science have the common aim of unity; of formulating natural laws.

## Mental Images

It is said of a certain famous craftsman that when designing, he seemed not to be making, but merely to be outlining a pattern that he already saw upon the paper before him. The true artist does not think out his picture, but "sees" it; his desire is to represent his vision in the material terms of line and colour. To the great painter, such pictures come continually, often too rapidly and too confusedly to be caught and disentangled. Could he but control his mental vision, define and hold it! But "fickle is the mind, Forward forceful, and stiff: I deem it as hard to check as is the wind"; yet by "constant labour and passionlessness it may be held", and this concentration of mental vision has been from long ago the very method of Indian religion, and the control of thought its ideal of worship. It is thus that the Hindu worships daily his *Ishta Devatā*, the special aspect of divinity that is to him all and more than the Patron Saint is to the Catholic. Simple men may worship such an one as *Gaṇeśa*, "easy to



reach, not far away ; some can make the greater effort needed to reach even **Naṭarāja**, and only for those whose heart is set upon the Unconditioned, is a mental image useless as a centre of thought. These last are few; and for those that adore an **Ishta Devatā**, or conditioned and special aspect of God, worship of Him consists first in the recitation of the brief mnemonic *mantram* detailing His attributes, and then in silent concentration of thought upon the corresponding mental image. These mental images are of the same nature as those the artist sees, and the process of visualisation is the same. Here, for example, is a verse from one of the imager's technical books (the **Rūpāvaliya**) :

These are marks of **Śiva** : a glorious visage, three eyes, a bow and an arrow, a serpent garland, ear-flowers, a rosary, four hands, a **triśūla**, a noose, a deer, hands betokening mildness and beneficence, a garment of tiger skin, His **vāhana** a bull of the hue of the chank :

It may be compared with the **Dhyāna** mantrams used in the daily meditation of a Hindu upon the **Gāyatrī** visualised as a Goddess :

In the evening **Sarasvatī** should be meditated upon as the essence of the **Sāma Veda**, fair of face, having two arms, holding a **triśūla** and a drum, old; and as **Rudrāṇī**, the bull her **vāhana**.

Almost the whole philosophy of Indian art is contained in the verse of **Śukrācārya's Śukranītisāra** which enjoins this method of visualisation upon the imager :

In order that the form of an image may be brought fully and clearly before the mind, the image maker should meditate ; and his success will be in proportion to his meditation. No other way—not indeed seeing the object itself—will achieve his purpose.<sup>2</sup>

## Māyā

It cannot be too clearly understood that the mere representation of nature is never the aim of Indian art. Probably no truly Indian sculpture has been wrought from a living model, or any religious painting copied from life. Possibly no Hindu artist of the old schools ever drew from nature at all. His store of memory pictures, his power of visualisation and his imagination were, for his purpose, finer means : for he desired to suggest the Idea behind sensuous appearance, not to give the detail of the seeming reality, that was in truth but **māyā**, illusion. For in spite of the pantheistic accommodation of infinite truth to the capacity of finite minds, whereby God is conceived as entering into all things, Nature remains to the Hindu a veil, not a revelation ; and art is to be something more than a mere imitation of this **māyā**, it is to manifest what lies behind. To mistake the **māyā** for reality were error indeed :



Men of no understanding think of Me, the unmanifest, as having manifestation, knowing not My higher being to be changeless, supreme.

Veiled by the Magic of My Rule (*Yoga -Māyā*), I am not revealed to all the world ; this world is bewildered and perceives Me not as birthless and unchanging (*Bhagavad Gītā*, VII, 24, 25)

### Indo-Persian

Of course, an exception to these principles in Indian art may be pointed to in the Indo-Persian school of portrait miniature ; and this work does show that it was no lack of power that in most other cases kept the Indian artist from realistic representation. But here the deliberate aim is portraiture, not the representation of Divinity or Superman. And even in the portraits there are many ideal qualities apparent. In purely Hindu and religious art, however, even portraits are felt to be lesser art than the purely ideal and abstract representations ; and such realism as we find, for example, in the Ajanta paintings, is due to the keenness of the artist's memory of familiar things, not to his desire faithfully to record appearances. For realism that thus represents keenness of memory picture, strength of imagination, there is room in all art ; duly restrained, it is so much added power. But realism which is of the nature of imitation of an object actually seen at the time of painting is quite antipathetic to imagination, and finds no place in the ideal of Indian art.

### Truth to Nature

Much of the criticism applied to works of art in modern times is based upon the idea of "truth to nature". The first thing for which many people look in a work of art is for something to recognize ; and if the representation is of something they have not seen, or symbolizes some unfamiliar abstract idea, it is thereby self-condemned as untrue to nature.

What, after all, is reality and what is truth ? The Indian thinker answers that nature, the phenomenal world that is, is known to him only through sensation, and that he has no warrant for supposing that sensations convey to him any adequate conception of the intrinsic reality of things in themselves ; nay, he denies that they have any such reality apart from himself. At most, natural forms are but incarnations of ideas, and each is but an incomplete expression. It is for the artist to portray the ideal world (*Rūpa-loka*) of true reality, the world of imagination ; and this very word imagination, or visualisation, expresses the method he must employ.

How strangely this art philosophy contrasts with that characteristic of the modern West, so clearly set forth in Browning's poem :

"But why not do as well as say,—paint these



Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?

God's works—paint any one...

...Have you notice, now,

You cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,

And trust me but you should though ! How much more

If I drew higher things with the same truth !

That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,

Interpret God to all of you !"

For such realists, this last is not the function of art ; but to us it seems that the very essential function of art is to "interpret God to all of you".

### Burne-Jones

Burne-Jones almost alone amongst artists of the modern West seems to have understood art as we in India understand it. To a critic who named as a drawback in the work of a certain artist, that his pictures looked as if he had done them only out of his head, Burne-Jones replied, "The place where I think pictures ought to come from".

Of impressionism as understood in the West, and the claim that breadth is gained by lack of finish, Burne-Jones spoke as an Eastern artist might have done. Breadth could be got "by beautiful finish and bright, clear colour well-matched, rather than by muzzy. They [the Impressionists] do make atmosphere, but they don't make anything else : they don't make beauty, they don't make design, they don't make idea, they don't make anything but atmosphere—and I don't think that's enough—I don't think it's very much". Of realism he spoke thus : "Realism ? Direct transcript from Nature ? I suppose by the time the "photographic artist" can give us all the colours as correctly as the shapes, people will begin to find out that the realism they talk about isn't art at all, but science ; interesting no doubt, as a scientific achievement, but nothing more.... Transcripts from Nature, what do I want with transcripts ? I prefer her own signature ; I don't want forgeries more or less skilful.... It is the message, the "burden" of a picture that makes its real value".

At another time he said, "You see, it is these things of the soul that are real—the only real things in the universe".

Of the religiousness of art, he said :

That was an awful thought of Ruskin's, that artists paint God for the world. There's a lump of greasy pigment at the end of Michael Angelo's hog-bristle brush, and by the time it has been laid on the stucco, there is something there, that all men with eyes recognize as divine. Think of what it means. It is the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest.

The object of art must be either to please or to exalt : I can't see any other reason for it at all. One is a pretty reason, the other a noble one.



Of "expression" in imaginative pictures, he said :

Of course my faces have no expression in the sense in which people use the word. How should they have any ? They are not portraits of people in paroxysms—paroxysms of terror, hatred, benevolence, desire, avarice, veneration and all the "passions" and "emotions" that Le Brun and that kind of person find so *magnifique* in Raphael's later work.....The only expression allowable in great portraiture is the expression of character and moral quality, not of anything temporary, fleeting, accidental. Apart from portraiture you don't want even so much, or very seldom : in fact you want only types, symbols, suggestions. The moment you give what people call expression, you destroy the typical characters of heads and degrade them into portraits which stand for nothing." <sup>3</sup>

### Technical Perfection

Common criticisms of Indian art are based on supposed or real limitations of technical attainment in representations, especially of the figure. In part, it may be answered that so little is known in the West of the real achievement of Indian art, that this idea may be allowed to die a natural death in the course of time ; and in part, that technical attainment is only a means, not an end. There is an order of importance in the things art means to us—is it not something thus : first, What has the artist to say ? and second only, Is his drawing scientifically accurate ? Bad drawing is certainly not in itself desirable, nor good drawing, a misfortune ; but, strange as it may seem, it has always happened in the history of art, that by the time perfection of technique has been attained, inspiration has declined. It was so in Greece, and in Europe after the Renaissance. It almost seems as if concentration upon technique hindered the free working of the imagination a little ; if so, however much we desire both, do not let us make any mistake as to which is first.

Also, accuracy is not always even desirable. It has been shown by photography that the galloping horse has never been accurately drawn in art ; let us hope it never will be. For art has to make use of abstractions and memory pictures, not of photographs ; it is a synthesis, not an analysis. And so the whole question of accuracy is relative ; and the last word was said by Leonardo de Vinci : "That figure is best which by its action best expresses the passion that animates it". This is the true impressionism of the East, a very different thing from impressionism as now understood in the West.

### Indian Art Religious

Indian art is essentially religious. The conscious aim of Indian art is the portrayal of Divinity. But the infinite and unconditioned cannot be expressed in finite terms ; and art, unable to portray Divinity unconditioned, and unwilling to be limited by the limitation of humanity, is in India dedicated to the representation of Gods who, to finite man, represent comprehensible aspects



of an infinite whole. Śāṅkarācārya prayed thus : "O Lord, pardon my three sins : I have in contemplation clothed in form Thyself that hast no form ; I have in praise described Thee who dost transcend all qualities ; and in visiting shrines I have ignored Thine omni-presence." So, too, the Tamil poetess Auvvai was once rebuked by a priest for irreverence, in stretching out her limbs towards an image of God : "You say well, Sir", she answered, "yet if you will point out to me a direction where God is not, I will there stretch out my limbs." But such conceptions, though we know them at heart to be true and absolute, involve a denial of all exoteric truth ; they are not enough, or rather they are too much, for ordinary men to live by :

Exceeding great is the toil of these whose mind is attached to the Unshown; for the Unshown Way is painfully won by them that wear the body.

But as for them who, having cast all works on Me and given themselves over to Me, worship Me in meditation, with whole hearted **yoga**.

These speedily I lift up from the sea of death and life, O Pārtha, their minds being set on Me (**Bhagavad Gītā**, XII, 5-7).

And so it is that "any Indian man or woman will worship at the feet of some inspired wayfarer who tells them that there can be no image of God, that the world itself is a limitation, and go straight-way, as the natural consequence, to pour water on the head of the Siva-lingam."<sup>4</sup> Indian religion has accepted art, as it has accepted life in its entirety, with open eyes. India, with all her passion for renunciation, has never suffered from that terrible flight of the imagination which confuses the ideals of the ascetic and of the citizen. The citizen is indeed to be restrained ; but the very essence of his method is that he should learn restraint or temperance by life, not by the rejection of life. For him, the rejection of life, called Puritanism would be *in-temperance*.

## Renunciation

What then of the true ascetic, with his ideal of renunciation ? It has been thought by many Hindus and Buddhists, as it has by many Christians, that rapid spiritual progress is compatible only with an ascetic life. The goal before us all is salvation from the limitation of individuality, and realisation of unity with unconditioned absolute being. Before such a goal can be attained, even the highest intellectual and emotional attachments must be put away; art, like all else in time and space, must be transcended. Three states or planes of existence are spoken of in Indian metaphysics : **Kāma-loka**, the sphere of phenomenal appearance; **Rūpa-loka**, the sphere of ideal form; and **Arūpa-loka**, the sphere beyond form. Great art suggests the ideal forms of the **Rūpa-loka**, in terms of the appearances of **Kāma-loka**; but what is art to one that toils upon the Unshown Way, seeking to transcend all limitations of the human



intellect, to reach a plane of being unconditioned even by ideal form ? For such an one, the most refined and intellectual delights are but flowery meadows where men may linger and delay, while the strait path to utter truth waits vainly for the traveller's feet. This thought explains the belief that absolute emancipation is hardly won by any but human beings yet incarnate; it is harder for the Gods to attain such release, for their pure and exalted bliss and knowledge are attachments even stronger than these of earth. And so we find such an instruction as this :

Form, sound, taste, smell, touch, these intoxicate beings : cut off the yearning which is inherent in them (*Dhammika Sutta*).

The extreme expressions of this thought seem to us more terrible than even the "coldness of Christian men to external beauty"; we feel this, for instance, in reading the story of the Buddhist monk, Chitta Gutta, who dwelt in a certain cave for sixty years without ever raising his eyes above the ground so far as to observe the beautifully painted roof; nor was he ever aware of the yearly flowering of a great *nā-tree* before his cave, except through seeing the pollen fallen upon the ground. But Indian thought has never dreamed of imposing such ideals upon the citizen, whose *dharma* lies, not in the renunciation of action, but in right action without attachment to its fruits; and for such, who must ever form the great majority of the people, art is both an aid to, and a means of, spiritual progress. One thing is of importance for us, that while we run no risk of confusing these two ideals, we should not judge of their relative value or rightness for others; each man must do that for himself; and so we are to respect both monk and citizen, peasant and king, not for their position, but for their fulfilment of their own ideals. This same-sightedness explains to us the seeming paradox that Hinduism and Buddhism, with their ideals of renunciation, have, like Mediaeval Christianity, been at once the inspiration and the stronghold of art.

## Symbolism

India is wont to suggest the eternal and inexpressible infinities in terms of sensuous beauty. The love of man for woman or for nature are one with his love for God. Nothing is common or unclean. All life is a sacrament, no part of it more so than another, and there is no part of it that may not symbolize eternal and infinite things. In this great same-sightedness, how great is the opportunity for art. But in this religious art it must not be forgotten that life is not to be represented for its own sake, but for the sake of the Divine expressed in and through it. It is laid down :

It is always commendable for the artist to draw the images of gods. To make human figures is wrong, or even unholy. Even a mishapen image of God is always better than an image of man, however beautiful (*Śukrācārya*).



देवानां प्रतिबिम्बानि कुर्याच्छ्रेयस्कराणि च ।

स्वर्गाणि मानवादीनामस्वर्गाण्यनुष्ठानि च ।

अपि श्रेयस्करं नृणां देवबिम्बमलक्षणम् ।

सलक्षणं मर्त्यबिम्बं न हि श्रेयस्करं सदा ।

(IV. 3. 77-79)

The doctrine here so sternly stated means, in other words, that imitation and portraiture are lesser aims than the representation of ideal and symbolic forms : the aim of the highest art must always be the intimation of the Divinity behind all form, rather than the imitation of the form itself. One may, for instance, depict the sport of **Krishna** with the Gopis, but it must be in a spirit of religious idealism, not for the mere sake of the sensuous imagery itself. In terms of European art, it would have been wrong for Giotto or Botticelli, who could give to the world an ideal conception of the Madonna, to have been content to portray obviously earthly persons posing as the Madonna, as was done in later times, when art had passed downwards from spiritual idealism to naturalism. So also Millais' later work has a lower aim than his earlier. In India also, the work of Ravi Varma, whose gods and heroes are but men cast in a very common mould, is "unholy" compared with the ideal pictures of Tagore.

### Formal Beauty

What is the ideal of beauty implicit in Indian art ? It is a beauty of type, impersonal and aloof. It is not an ideal of varied individual beauty, but of one formalised and rhythmic. The canons insist again and again upon the Ideal as the only true beauty :

"An image whose limbs are made in accordance with the rules laid down in the **śāstras** is beautiful. Some, however, deem that which pleases the fancy to be beautiful; but proportions that differ from those given in the **śāstras** cannot delight the cultured" (**Sukrācārya**).

The appeal of formalised ideal beauty is for the Indian mind always stronger than that of beauty associated with the accidental and unessential. The beauty of art, whether fictile or literary, is more compelling and deeper than that of nature herself. These pure ideas, thus disentangled from the web of circumstance by art, are less realised and so more suggestive than fact itself. This is the explanation of the passionate love of nature expressed in Indian art and literature, that is yet combined almost with indifference to the beauty, certainly to the 'picturesqueness', of nature herself.

An essential part of the ideal of beauty is restraint in representation :

"The hands and feet should be without veins. The (bones of) the wrist and ankle should not be shown" (**Sukrācārya**):



शिरोज्झितौ पाणिपादौ गूढगुल्फौ प्रकीर्तितौ ।

Over-minuteness would be a sacrifice of breadth. It is not for the imager to spend his time in displaying his knowledge or his skill; for over-elaborated detail may destroy rather than heighten the beauty of the work; in the presence of the work of Michael Angelo, we can never forget how much anatomy he knows. But this objection to the laborious realisation of parts of a work of art must not be confused with the pernicious doctrine of the excellence of unfinished work. Oriental art is essentially clear and defined; its mystery does not depend on vagueness.

Adherence to the proportions laid down in the *śāstras* is even inculcated by imprecations :

If the measurements be out by even half an inch, the result will be loss of wealth, or death (*Śāriputra*).

One who knows amiss his craft.....after his death will fall into hell and suffer (*Māyāmataya*).

In such phrases we seem to see the framers of the canon consciously endeavouring to secure the permanence of the tradition in future generations, and amongst ignorant or inferior craftsmen. We shall see later what has been the function of tradition in Indian art. It appears here as an extension in time of the idea of formal beauty and symbolism.

### Beauty not the only Aim

But it is not necessary for all art to be beautiful, certainly not pretty. If art is ultimately to "interpret God to all of you", it must be now beautiful, now terrible, but always with that living quality which transcends the limited conceptions of beauty and ugliness. The personal God whom alone art can interpret, is in and through all nature; "All this Universe is strung upon Me as gems upon a thread". Nature is sometimes soft and smiling, sometimes also red in tooth and claw; in her, both life and death are found. Creation, preservation and destruction are equally His work. His images may therefore be beautiful or terrible.

In nature there are three *guṇas*, or qualities, *Sattva* (truth), *Rajas* (passion), and *Tamas* (gloom). These qualities are always present in nature; their relative proportion determines the character of any particular subject or object. They must, therefore, enter into all material and conditioned representations, even of Divinity, in which, nevertheless, *sattva guṇa* must preponderate. And so we find a classification of images into three, *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*.

An image of God, seated self-contained, in the posture of a *yogi*, with hands turned as if granting boon and encouragement to his worshippers, surrounded by praying and worshipping Indra and other gods, is called a *sāttvika image* :



योगमुद्रान्विता स्वस्था वराभयकरान्विता ।

देवेन्द्रादिस्तुतनुता सात्त्विकी सा प्रकीर्तिता ॥

(IV. 3. 81)

An image seated on a *vāhana*, decked with various ornaments, with hands bearing weapons, as well as granting boon and encouragement, is called a *rājasika* image.

A *tāmasika* image is a terrible armed figure fighting and destroying the demons (*Śukrācārya*).

तिष्ठन्तो वाहनस्था वा नानाभरणभूषिता ।

या शस्त्रास्त्रभयवर-करा सा राजसी स्मृता ॥

शस्त्रास्त्रौर्देत्यहन्ती या ह्यप्ररूपधरा सदा ।

युद्धाभिनन्दिनी सा तु तामसी प्रतिमोच्यते ॥

(IV. 3. 82-83)

It is the same with architecture. Here, too, the design is to suggest and symbolize the Universe; the site of a temple or town is laid out in relation to astrological observations; every stone has its place in the cosmic design, and the very faults of execution represent but the imperfections and shortcomings of the craftsman himself. Can we wonder that a beautiful and dignified architecture is thus devised, or can such conceptions fail to be reflected in the dignity and serenity of life itself? Under such conditions, the craftsman is not an individual expressing individual whims, but a part of the Universe giving expression to the ideals of its own eternal beauty and unchanging law.

### Decorative Art

Exactly the same ideas of formal beauty prevail in relation to purely decorative art. The aim of such art is not, of course, in the same sense consciously religious; the simple expression of delight in cunning workmanship, or of the craftsman's humour, or his fear or his desire are motifs that inspire the lesser art that belongs to the common things of life. But yet all art is really one, consistent with itself and with life; how should one part of it be fundamentally opposed to another? And so we find in the decorative art of India the same idealism that is inseparable from Indian thought; for art, like religion, is really a way of looking at things, more than anything else. The love of nature in its infinite beauty and variety has impelled the craftsman to decorate his handiwork with the forms of the well-known birds and flowers and beasts with which he is most intimate, or which have most appealed to his imagination. But these forms he never represents realistically; they are always memory pictures, combined with fanciful creations of the imagination into symmetrical and rhythmic ornament.



## Lions

Take, for example, the treatment of lions in decorative art. Verses of the canon relating to animals often show that the object of the canon has been as much to stimulate imagination, as to define the manner of representation :

The neigh of a horse is like the sound of a storm, his eyes like the lotus, he is swift as the wind, as stately as a lion, and his gait is the gait of a dancer.

The lion has eyes like those of a hare, a fierce aspect, soft hair long on his chest and under his shoulders, his back is plump like a sheep's his body is that of a blooded horse, his gait is stately, and his tail long (Sāriputra).

For comparison, I quote another description, from an old Chinese canon :

With a form like that of a tiger, and with a colour tawny or sometimes blue, the lion is like the **Muku-inu**, a shaggy dog. He has a huge head, hard as bronze, a long tail, forehead firm as iron, hooked fangs, eyes like bended bows, and raised ears; his eyes flash like lightning, and his roar is like thunder. 5

Such descriptions throw light on the representation of animals in Oriental decorative art. The artist's lion need be like no lion on earth or in any zoological garden; for he is not illustrating a work on natural history. Freed from such a limitation, he is able to express through his lion the whole theory of his national existence and individual idiosyncrasy. Thus has Oriental art been preserved from such paltry and emasculated realism as that of the lions of Trafalgar Square. Contrast the absence of imagination in the handiwork of the English painter of domestic pets with the vitality of the heraldic lions of Mediaeval England, of the lions of Hokusai's "Daily Exorcisms". The sculptured lions of Egypt, Assyria, or India are true works of art, for in them we see, not any lion that could today be shot or photographed in a desert, but the lion as he existed in the minds of a people, a lion that tells us something of the people who represented him. In such artistic subjectivity lies the significance of Ancient and Eastern decorative art; it is this which gives so much dignity and value to the lesser arts of India, and separates them so entirely in spirit from the imitative decorative art of modern Europe.

## Jewellery

Take Indian jewellery as another illustration of idealism in decorative art. The traditional forms have distinctive names, just as a "curb bracelet" or a "gypsy ring" may be spoken of in England. In India the names are usually those of special flowers or fruits, or generic terms for flowers or seeds, as "*rui*-flower thread", "coconut-flower garland," "petal garland," "string of millet grains", "ear-flower", "hair-flower". These names are reminiscent of the garlands of real flowers, and the flowers in the hair, that play so important a part in Indian



festal dress. These, with the flowers and fruits worn as talismans or as religious symbols, are the prototypes of flower forms of Indian jewellery, which thus, like all other Indian art, reflects the thought, the life and the history of the people by and for whom it is so beautifully made.

The traditional forms, then, are named after flowers; but it is highly characteristic that the garlands and flowers are in design purely suggestive, not at all imitative of the prototypes. The realism which is so characteristic of nearly all modern Western art, in jewellery producing the unimaginative imitations of flowers, leaves, and animals of the school of Lalique, is never found in Indian design.

### Imitation and Design

The passion for imitation may be taken as direct evidence of the lack of true artistic impulse, which is always a desire, conscious or sub-conscious, to express or manifest Idea. Why indeed imitate where you can never rival? Nor is it by a conscious intellectual effort that a flower is to be conventionalised and made into applied ornament. No true Indian craftsman sets a flower before him and worries out of it some sort of ornament by taking thought; his art is more deeply rooted in the national life than that. If the flower has not meant so much to him that he has already a clear memory picture of its essential characters, he may as well ignore it in his decoration; for a decorative art not intimately related to his own experience, and to that of his fellow men, could have no intrinsic vitality, nor meet with that immediate response which rewards the prophet speaking in a mother-tongue. It is, of course, true that the original memory pictures are handed on as crystallised traditions; yet as long as the art is living, the tradition remains also plastic, and is moulded imperceptibly by successive generations. The force of its appeal is strengthened by the association of ideas—artistic, emotional and religious. Traditional forms have thus a significance not merely foreign to any imitative art, but dependent on the fact that they represent race conceptions, rather than the ideas of one artist or of a single period. They are a vital expression of the race mind: to reject them, and expect great art to live on as before, would be to sever the roots of a forest tree and still look for flowers and fruit upon its branches.

### Patterns

Consider, also, patterns. I have found that to most people patterns mean extremely little; they are things to be made and cast aside for new, only requiring to be pretty, perhaps only to be fashionable; whereas they are things which live and grow, and which no man can create, all he can do is to use them, and to let them grow. Every real pattern has a long ancestry and a story to tell. For those that can read its language, even the most strictly decorative art



has complex and symbolical associations that enhance a thousandfold the significance of its expression, as the complex associations that belong to words; enrich the measured web of spoken verse. This is not, of course, to suggest that such art has a didactic character, but only that it has some meaning and something to say; but if you do not want to listen, it is still a piece of decoration far better than some new thing that has "broken" with tradition and is "original", May Heaven preserve us from the decorative art of today, that professes to be new and original. The truth is expressed by Ruskin in the following words.

That virtue of originality that men so strain after is not **newness** (as they vainly think), it is only genuineness; it all depends on this single glorious faculty of getting to the spring of things and working out from that.

Observe that here we have come back to the essentially Indian point of view, getting to the spring of things, and working out from that. You will get all the freshness and individuality you want if you do that. This is to be seen in the vigour and vitality of the designs of William Morris, compared with the work of designers who have deliberately striven to be original. Morris tried to do no more than recover the thread of a lost tradition and carry it on; and yet no one could mistake the work of Morris for that of any other man or any other century or country-and is that not originality enough?

### Convention

Convention may be defined as the manner of artistic presentation, while tradition stands for a historic continuity in the use of such conventional methods of expression. Many have thought that convention and tradition are the foes of art, and deem the epithets "conventional and traditional" to be in themselves of the nature of destructive criticism. Convention is conceived of solely as limitation, not as a language and a means of expression. But to one realising what tradition really means, a quite contrary view presents itself; that of the terrible and almost hopeless disadvantage from which art suffers when each artist and each craftsman, or at the best, each little group and school, has first to create a language, before ideas can be expressed in it. For tradition is a wonderful, expressive language, that enables the artist working through it to speak directly to the heart without the necessity for explanation. It is a mother-tongue, every phrase of it rich with the countless shades of meaning read into it by the simple and the great that have made and used it in the past.

It may be said that these principles hold good only in relation to decorative art. Let us, then, enquire into the place and influence of tradition in the fine art of India. The written traditions, once orally transmitted, consist mainly



of memory verses, exactly corresponding to the mnemonic verses of early Indian literature. In both cases, the artist, imager or story-teller, had also a fuller and more living tradition, handed down in the schools from generation to generation, enabling him to fill out the meagre details of the written canon. Sometimes, in addition to the verses of the canon books of mnemonic sketches were in use, and handed down from master to pupil in the same way. These give us an opportunity of more exactly understanding the nature and method of tradition.

### Naṭarāja

The accompanying illustration is reproduced from an old Tamil craftsman's sketch book, a figure of Śiva as Naṭarāja. In order to understand this, it is necessary first to explain the legend and conception of Śiva's appearance



Natarāja : from a Tamil craftsman's  
notebook  
(early XIXth century)

as the "Dancing Lord". The story is given in the **Koyil Purānam**, and is familiar to all Śaivites. Śiva appeared in disguise amongst a congregation of ten thousand sages and, in the course of disputation, confuted them and so angered them thereby, that they endeavoured by incantations, to destroy Him. A fierce tiger was created in sacrificial flames, and rushed upon Him, but smiling gently, He seized it with His sacred hands, and with the nail of His little finger stripped off its skin, which He wrapped about Himself as if it had been a silken cloth. Undiscouraged by failure, the sages renewed their offerings, and there was produced a monstrous serpent, which He seized and wreathed about His neck. Then He began to dance ; but there rushed upon Him a last monster in the



shape of a hideous malignant dwarf. Upon Him the God pressed the tip of His foot and broke the creature's back, so that it writhed upon the ground ; and so, His last foe prostrate, Śiva resumed the dance of which the gods were witnesses. One interpretation of this legend explains that He wraps about Him as a garment, the tiger fury of human passion ; the guile and malice of mankind He wears as a necklace, and beneath His feet is for ever crushed the embodiment of evil. More characteristic of Indian thought is the symbolism, in terms of the marvellous grace and rhythm of Indian dancing, the effortless ease with which the God in His grace supports the cosmos ; it is His sport. The five acts of creation, preservation, destruction, embodiment and gracious release are His ceaseless mystic dance. In sacred Tillai, the "New Jerusalem", the dance shall be revealed ; and Tillai is the very centre of the Universe, that is, His dance is within the cosmos and the soul.<sup>6</sup>

The necessity for such an explanation emphasizes the apparent difficulty of understanding Indian art ; but it must be remembered that the element of strangeness in Indian art is not there for its makers and those for whom they worked ; it speaks, as all great national art must speak, in a language of its own, and it is evident that the grammar of this art language must be understood before the message can be appreciated, or the mind left free to consider what shall be its estimate of the artistic qualities of a work before it.

Here then is a rough sketch, drawn by an inferior craftsman, and representing very fairly just that amount of guidance which tradition somewhat precisely hands on for the behoof of each succeeding generation of imagers. This conception is fairly often met with in Southern India, sculptured in stone or cast in bronze. Some of these representations have no especial artistic excellence ; but so subjective is appreciation of art, so dependent on qualities belonging entirely to the beholder, and transferred by him into the object before him, that the symbolic and religious aim is still attained. Such is one of the functions of tradition, making it possible for ordinary craftsmen to work acceptably within its limits, and avoiding all danger of the great and sacred subjects being treated with loss of dignity or reverence. But tradition has another aspect, as enabling the great artist, the man of genius, to say in the language understood by the people, all that there is in him to express.

A bronze figure of Naṭarāja, perhaps of the seventeenth century or even older, is in the Madras Museum. It would be superfluous to praise in detail this beautiful figure ; it is so alive, and yet so balanced, so powerful and yet so effortless. There is here realism for the realist, but realism that is due to keenness of memory for familiar things, not to their imitation. The imager grew up under the shadow of a Sivan temple in one of the great cathedral cities of the South ; perhaps Tanjore ; he had worked with his father at the



columns of the Thousand Pillared Hall at Madura, and later at the Choultry, when all the craftsmen of Southern India flocked to carry out the great buildings of Tirumala Nayaka ; himself a **Śaivite**, he knew all its familiar ritual, and day after day he had seen the dancing of the **devadāsīs** before the shrine, perhaps in his youth had been the lover of one more skilled and graceful than the rest ; and all his memories of rhythmic dance, and mingled devotion for **devadāsī** and for Deity, he expressed in the grace and beauty of this dancing **Śiva**. For so are religion and culture, life and art, bound up together in the web of Indian life. Is the tradition that links that art to life of little value, or less than none, to the great genius ? Shall he reject the imagery ready to his hand, because it is not new and unfamiliar ? Look well at the figure, with its first and simplest motif of victory over evil ; observe the ring of flaming fire, the aura of His glory ; the four hands with the elaborate symbolism of their attitude ; the fluttering **aṅgavastram**, and the serpent garland, and think whether any individual artist, creating his own convention and inventing newer symbolisms, could speak thus to the hearts of men, amongst whom the story of **Śiva's** dance is a gospel and a cradle tale.

## Buddha

The seated Buddha is a more familiar type. Here, too, convention and tradition are held to fetter artistic imagination. Indian art is sometimes condemned for showing no development, because there is, or is supposed to be, no difference in artistic conception between a Buddha of the first century and one of the nineteenth. It is, of course, not quite true that there is no development, in the sense that the work of each period is altogether uncharacterised, for those who know something of Indian art are able to estimate with some confidence the century to which a statue belongs. But it is true that the conception is really the same ; the mistake lies in thinking this an artistic weakness. It is an expression of the fact that the Indian ideal has not changed. What is that ideal so passionately desired ? It is one-pointedness, same-sightedness, control : little by little to control the fickle and unsteady mind ; little by little to win stillness, to rein in, not merely the senses, but the mind, that is as hard to check as is the wind. As a lamp that flickers not in a windless spot, so is the mind to be at rest. Only by constant labour and passionlessness is this peace to be attained. What is the attitude of mind and body of one that seeks it ? He shall be seated like the image, for that posture, once acquired, is one of perfect bodily equipoise :

He shall seat himself with thought intent and the workings of mind and sense instruments restrained, for purification of spirit labour on the **yoga**.

Firm, holding body, head, and neck in unmoving equipoise, gazing on the end of his nose, and looking not round about him.



Calm of spirit, void of fear, abiding under the vow of chastity, with mind restrained and thought set on Me, so shall he sit that is under the Rule, given over unto Me.

In this wise the **yogi** . . . comes to the peace that ends in **nirvāṇa** and that abides in Me (**Bhagavad Gītā**, VI, 12-15)

How then should the greatest of India's teachers be represented in art? How otherwise than seated in this posture that is in the heart of India associated with every striving after the great Ideal, and in which the Buddha himself was seated on the night when the attacks of **Mra** were for ever foiled, and that insight came at last, to gain which the Buddha had in countless lives sacrificed his body "for the sake of creatures"? It was the greatest moment in India's spiritual history; and as it lives in the race-memory, so is it of necessity presented in the race-art.

### Conclusion

Such, then, have been the aims and method of Indian Art in the past. Two tendencies are manifested in the Indian art of today, the one inspired by the technical achievement of the modern West, the other by the spiritual idealism of the East. The former has swept away both the beauty and the limitation of the old tradition. The latter has but newly found expression; yet if the greatest art is always both national and religious (and how empty any other art must be), it is there alone that we see the beginnings of a new and greater art, that will fulfil and not destroy the past. When a living Indian culture arises out of the wreck of the past and the struggle of the present, a new tradition will be born, and new vision find expression in the language of form and colour, no less than in that of words and rhythm. The people to whom the great conceptions came are still the Indian people, and when life is strong in them again, strong also will be their art. It may be that the fruit of a deeper national life, a wider culture, and a profounder love, will be an art greater than any in the past. But this can only be through growth and development, not by a sudden rejection of the past. A particular convention is the characteristic expression of a period, the product of particular conditions; it resumes the historic evolution of the national culture. The convention of the future must be similarly related to the national life. We stand in relation both to past and future; in the past we made the present, the future we are moulding now, and our duty to this future is that we should enrich, not destroy, the inheritance that is not India's alone, but the inheritance of all humanity.





## REFERENCES

1. i.e., riding upon a snow-white bull.
2. In other words : "The artist should attain to the images of Gods by means of spiritual contemplation only. This spiritual vision is the best and truest standard for him. He should depend upon it ; and not, indeed, upon the visible objects perceived by the external senses" :

ध्यानयोगस्य संसिद्धये प्रतिमालक्षणं स्मृतम् ।  
 प्रतिमाकारको मर्त्यो यथा ध्यानरतो भवेत् ॥  
 तथा नान्येन मार्गेण प्रत्यक्षेणापि व खलु ।  
 ( IV. 3. 75-76 )

3. Quotations from *Memorial of Edward Burne-Jones*, by Lady Burne-Jones, 1904.
4. Okakura, *Ideals of the East*, p. 65.
5. Quoted in *The Kokka*, No. 198, 1906.
6. Pope, 'Tiruvācagam', p. lxiii ; Nallaswami Pillai, 'Sivagnana Botham', Madras, 1895, p. 74.





# The Art of Asia

(Asiatic Art : INDIA)\*

It was first emphatically pointed out by Okakura Kakuzo, in "*The Ideals of the East*", that Asiatic Art—essentially the art of India and the Far East—shows a fundamental unity. To follow the development of such an art in any profound way demands of the student an understanding of the life it expresses, alike in its institutional and spiritual aspects. These, again, are inseparably connected, and not, as they are in modern industrial societies, sharply divided : connected, as they were in Medieval Europe, where the guild and the cathedral belonged to a common order. Contrary to popular belief, in other words, the art of Asia is not an art of luxury but an art of use and expression; and we should remember that art is never 'quaint' except for those who do not understand it.

The greatest crisis of Indian history centres round approximately the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., and finds expression in the philosophy of the **Upaniṣads** and the psychology of Buddhism. These were intellectual rather than emotional movements, not requiring, and even consciously avoiding aesthetic formulation. The history of Indian sculpture and painting is, in fact, directly determined, not by the philosophies, but by the development of the devotional cults, with their theology and ritual.

Early Buddhist art, of the third or second century B. C. is realistic, and omits from its representation of edifying anecdote the figure of the Buddha himself, who belongs no more to any world or heaven of sense or form. But when to all intents and purposes the Buddha was 'deified', and Buddhist theologians developed the doctrine of the Bodhisattvas—Buddhas of the future, meanwhile, dedicated to the work of salvation—need was felt for images visibly representing the adored divinities. It was inevitable then that the Buddha should be represented in the likeness of a seated Yogin, in the posture already long and inseparably associated with the practise of the meditations that lead to spiritual freedom. The Yogin is compared to a flame in a windless spot that does not flicker. It was these positions that determined the external form and



inner content of the monumental type of the seated Buddha which is at once the earliest and the supreme expression of religious art in Asia. Contrasted with this symbol of attainment are the activities of teaching and the emotions of compassion and of supernatural generosity that characterize the Bodhisattvas, and their feminine counterparts, the Taras.

The development of Hindu art is similarly determined, though its earliest manifestations are perhaps no longer extant. The doctrine of devotion to a personal god—the Adorable, manifest in Krishna—is laid down with special emphasis in the **Bhagavad—Gīta**, a work probably antecedent to the Christian era, while images of Hindu gods were certainly made as early as the second century B. C. It is not, however, until the Gupta period (4th—6th century A.D.) that we meet with actual images of Vishnu and illustrations of the Krishna legends : side by side with these there appear the figure of **Śiva**, who represents, in the main, the Terrible, as Vishnu the benign, powers of Nature. This Brahmanical sculpture reaches its zenith in the seventh and eighth centuries : the work of this period is of monumental quality, and cut, for the most part in the living rock.

Aside from Nepal and Ceylon, and Bengal until the 12th century, Buddhism and Buddhist art disappear from India after the eighth century, and the whole of Indian Art, apart from the surviving traditions of the Jainas, and the Musalman art of the Mughal period, is Hindu. The sculpture takes the form of the immovable (usually stone) principal images of the temples; the movable images carried in processions and those used in private chapels (usually of copper or brass); and the external sculpture of religious buildings in stone or stucco.

**Vaiṣṇava** sculpture perhaps predominates : but there is a southern school of **Śaiva** Art of immense importance and interest. The southern 'bronzes' are best known by the figures of **Naṭarāja**, or Lord of the Dance—one of the many forms of **Śiva**. As the Buddha figure stands for the stillness of Absolute being (phenomenal Non-Existence), so that Dancing **Śiva** represents the manifestation of the Absolute in time, as a cosmic process of creation, continuation and destruction, and a spiritual process of illusion and release. Incidentally, we notice here the synthetic use of additional members—in the present case of two additional arms analogous to the methods employed by Egyptian, Greek and medieval art in the sphinxes, winged victories, angels and centaurs : the student who is startled by these methods may be reminded that the serious task of aesthetic appreciation is not to be evaded by a simple process of counting arms or of remarking anatomical impossibilities, and that the end of art is not achieved in verisimilitude, but in expression.

Turning now to painting, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that,



owing to accidental circumstances, there are yawning gaps in the series of extant remains. It is, indeed, a matter of congratulation that there should have been preserved, at Ajanta, on the walls of excavated Buddhist temples (the latest of which belong to the sixth or seventh centuries A.D.) an extensive series of frescoes illustrating the lives of the Buddha in his last and in previous incarnations. Animal and human life is represented here with passionate sympathy for all its loveliness : and the Buddhist spirit finds expression, less in hieratic formulae or in asceticism, than in the transparency with which the mutability of life is analyzed, as it passes before us in all its transient glory. Note, in passing, that this is a highly sophisticated art : and all its seeming spontaneity and naivete is the product of a supreme mastery of technique, and especially of an unsurpassed research in the expression of emotion in gesture. The connection between painting and dramatic technique is as close as that between the painting and the literature.

Jainism is a religion of contemporary origin with Buddhism, and somewhat analogous in its development. Jaina painting is represented by illustrations in manuscripts of the fifteenth century and later : and these are of interest not merely as the oldest surviving Indian paintings on paper, but as examples of Indian book illustration, which is as rare in the Hindu tradition as it is characteristic of the Persian and also because the old hieratic formulae are here so faithfully preserved, and the style is still classic.

In Rajput painting of the sixteenth to eighteenth century-the art of Rajputana and the Punjab hills, we recover the traces of the older Hindu traditions, in a different way, for here the greater part of the work is done on paper, and the themes are mainly determined by the same movement of **Vaiṣṇava** mysticism which finds expression in the Hindi poetry. Just as in the poetry however, the painting unites the elements of classic rhetoric with the culture of the folk, derived from the life of the village, home and pasture. The dominant motif is that of the Krishna legend-where the loves of the Divine Cowherd and the milkmaids of Brindaban are interpreted in the sense of a spiritual drama but subjects derived from epic literature, legends of **Śiva** and **Pārvatī**, and illustrations of the musical modes are almost equally characteristic. There is considerable variety in style. The sixteenth century 'musical modes' of Rajputana are daring in draughtsmanship and strong in colour recalling indeed, the palette used at Ajanta-while the seventeenth and eighteenth century works of the Himalayas, especially those from Kangra valley, are daintier in drawing and more tender in colouring. The Kangra valley paintings, indeed, possess an irresistible charm, peculiar to themselves, and unlike any other art in the world, with the possible exception of the Italian primitives.



Rajput painting is essentially an art of ideas and emotions : and in this respect it differs fundamentally from the contemporary and better known art of the Mughal courts, which attained to such high perfection under Akbar and Jahangir at the close of the sixteenth and in the earlier part of the seventeenth century. This is primarily an art of portraiture : and there still survives in various collections an almost unique gallery of surviving likenesses of all the prominent men of the period. In many cases the names of the painters are also known, Abdu-l-Samad, Abu-l-Hasan, Bishndas and Mansur being amongst the most important, the latter particularly as a painter of animals. Mughal art, however, scarcely belongs to the national tradition. It is not in any sense an art of the people : and it is eclectic, embodying Indian, Persian and European elements in almost equal proportions.

The only survival of the Mughal school is to be recognized in the nineteenth century and modern Delhi ivory miniatures, which are hardly to be regarded seriously as works of art.

Very recently there has been a revival of painting in Calcutta, led by Abanindranath and Gaganendranath Tagore, nephews of the poet, and their pupils. This new school is at once archaistic and eclectic, and marks a restoration in taste rather than a new development in creative power. The industrial arts of India are of the highest importance, but must be dismissed with the briefest mention in the present article. Enamelling has been called the master handicraft of India, and nothing can surpass the colour and design of the enamelled jewellery and decorated weapons. The wrought gold and gem-set jewellery and metal work are equally distinguished. The art of inlaying jade with precious stones was highly perfected under the Mughals, and a similar technique was used in architectural ornament, particularly in that of the famous Taj Mahal, the mausoleum of Nur Jahan\* built by Shah Jahan. Indian carpets, too, of the Mughal period are noteworthy. The cotton prints, flowered Muslin, embroideries and silk brocades are of wonderful charm and pure design. Ivory and wood carving are chiefly of architectural application.

One final word regarding the status of the craftsman and artist. Indian sociology is based on the idea of function. The position of the craftsman in such a society is secure, and he is protected alike by religious and secular sanctions. There can be no manner of doubt that he took a profound delight in his work, which he regarded as a vocation : and under no other conditions would it have been possible for him to have worked with so much devotion, or to have solved the problems submitted to him, with so much success.

\*. Correctly of Mumtāz Maḥal



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## Pali Kannika Circular Roof-Plate\*

The renderings of this word, in its architectural sense, in published translations of Pali texts (Cowell, *Jātaka*; Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, etc.) are so obviously unsatisfactory that it will be needless to cite them here. I have therefore consulted afresh practically all the original texts in which the word can be found:

The literal meaning of the word is, of course, "ear-thing", probably with reference to the idea of something standing out or projecting. The only example of the meaning "earring" (cf. *Hindī karṇphūl*) is *DA*.<sup>1</sup> I, 94, *Pilandhana-kannikā*. Cf. Sanskrit *karṇaka*, *karṇikā*, "projection", "handle", "earring", "pericarp of a lotus", "central point", etc. Very often the word is used to denote a part, namely the inner part, the seed-vessel, of a lotus. In *J. I*, 183, we have *Patta*, *kinjakkha*, *kannikā*, i. e. petals, stamens, pericarp of a lotus (*paduma*); the two first fall away, leaving the last "standing". The same words occur in the same sense in *Miln*. 361, except that *kesara* replaces *kinjakkha*. As is well known, the *paduma* (Skt. *padma*) seed-vessel has a flat circular top marked with smaller circles. In iconography it is precisely this top which forms the actual support of a deity seated or standing on a seat or pedestal (*pīṭha*); accordingly we find the upper part of a pedestal (*vedi*, *pīṭhaka*) designated in Sanskrit as *karṇikā* (*Mānasāra*, XXXII, 111, 112, and 117 with v. I. *kari-karṇa*).

The *paduma-kannikā* disc forms the top of a cylindrical body which narrows downwards towards the stalk of the flower. Probably because of their resemblance in shape to this form, shocks of rice standing in a field are called *kannikā-baddhā* (*DhA*. I, 81); they are tied in at the waist, so to say.

In *J. I*, 152, a fawn is said to be as beautiful as a *puppha-kannikā*, which may mean here no more than the "heart of a lotus flower."

We come now to the more difficult problem of *kannikā*, and *kannikā-maṇḍala* as an architectural term. We find it as part of the roof of a *kūṭāgāra*,

\* First published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Baltimore vol. L (1930) 238-43.



DA. I, 309, DhA. I, 77; of a *sālā*, J. I, 201 (=DhA. I, 269, *vissamāna-sālā*); of a *pāsāda* J. III, 431 and 472; of a king's *vāsāgāra*, J. III, 317-9; of a *geha* generally, DhA. IV, 178; and D. I, 94, where divination by the *lakkhaṇa*, lucky marks, of a *kaṇṇikā* is alluded to, the Commentary (DA. I, 94) explaining that the *kaṇṇikā* may be either an ornament, or the *kaṇṇikā* of a house, *geha*. *Kaṇṇikā-maṇḍala* seems to mean the same as *kaṇṇikā* as will appear from the texts (DhA. III, 66; IV. 178; J. III, 317) and from the fact that the *kaṇṇikā* is in any case round; just as a plate and the circle of a plate are practically the same thing.

In three places we have an account of arhats rising in the air and making their exit from the house by breaking through the *kaṇṇikā*. Thus, *pāsāda-Kaṇṇikaṃ dvidā katvā*, J. III, 472; *kūṭāgāra-kaṇṇikaṃ bhinditvā*, DhA. I, 77; *kaṇṇikā-maṇḍalaṃ bhinditvā*, DhA. III 66 in DhA. IV, 178 several novices make a miraculous exit; one breaks through the *kaṇṇikā-maṇḍala*, another through the front part of the roof (*ṇhadana*), another through the back of the roof.

In J. I, 200/201 and DhA. I, 269 we have the story of a woman (*Sudhammā*) who contrives, against the will of the original donors, to share in the meritorious work of building a public hall (*sālā*, *vissamāna-sālā*). She conspires with the carpenter (*vaḍḍhaki*) to become the most important person in connection with the hall, and it appears that the person who provides the *kaṇṇikā* is so regarded. A *kaṇṇika* cannot be made of green wood, so the carpenter dries, shapes (*tacchetvā*), and perforates (*vijjhivā*) a piece of *kaṇṇikā*-timber (*kaṇṇikā-rukham*) and the woman takes it, wraps it in a cloth, and puts it away. Presently the hall is nearly finished and it is time to put up the *kaṇṇikā*; as hers is the only one ready for use that can be found, it has to be used. In the DhA. version we are further told that an inscription was carved on the *kaṇṇikā* (*Sudhammā nāma ayaṃ sālā*. "This hall height *Sudhammā*," after the principal donor).

In J. III, 431, the king is told that a weevil has eaten up all the soft wood (*pheggu*) of the *kaṇṇika* of the *pāsāda*, but as the hard wood (*sāra*) is still intact, there is no danger.

The most instructive text is that of the *Kukku-Jātaka* J. III, 317-319). Here the king's *vāsāgāra* is unfinished; the rafters (*gopānasiyo*) are supporting the *kaṇṇikā*, but have only just been put up. The king enters the house (*geha*) and looking up sees the *kaṇṇika-maṇḍala*; he is afraid it will fall on him, and goes out again. He wonders how the *kaṇṇikā* and how the rafters are held up. Two verses follow; in the first, the size of the *kaṇṇikā* is given, it is one and a half *kukku* in diameter, eight *vidathī* in circumference,<sup>2</sup> and made



of *simsapa*<sup>3</sup> and *sāra* wood; why does it stand fast? In the second verse the Bodhisattva replies that it stands fast because the thirty rafters (*gopānasiyo*) of *sāra* wood "curved<sup>4</sup> and regularly arranged, compass it round, grip it tightly". The Bodhisattva goes on to expound a parable; the *kaṇṇikā* and rafters are like the king and his ministers and friends. If there is no *kaṇṇikā*, the rafters will not stand, if there are no rafters, there is nothing to support the *kaṇṇikā*; if the rafters break, the *kaṇṇikā* falls, just so in the case of a king and his ministers.

In *DA. I*, 309, gloss on *kūṭāgāra-sāla*, we have *kaṇṇikaṃ yojetvā tham-baṇaṃ upari kūṭāgāra-sāla-samkhepena deva-vimāna-sadisam pāsādaṃ akamṣu*. I now venture to render this passage not quite as in Mrs. Rhys David's translation quoted in *JAOS*, 48, p. 269, but "putting in the *kaṇṇikā*, they completed the mansion in the shape of a gabled hall (resting) on pillars, like to a palace of the *gada*". This is quite in accord with the architectural forms represented in the old reliefs, where the commonest type of more pretentious building is that of a pinnacled hall resting on pillars *samkhepena* is "in the shape of," just as in *DA. I* 260, *bhāmi-ghara-samkhepena pokkharaniṃ*. In *DA. I*, 43, gloss on *maṇḍalamāla* (a building in which the brethren assemble), we have "Wherever two *kaṇṇikās* are employed, and the thatching (*channa*) is done in goose or quail (-feather style), it is a *maṇḍala-mālā*, 'a circle hall,' and so also where one *kaṇṇikā* is employed and a row of pillars is set around about (the building) it is called *upat-ṭhana sālā* (attendance hall) or *maṇḍala-mālā*. Here then, *maṇḍala-mālā* must mean 'assembly hall.'<sup>5</sup> It is clear that when the size of a building required it, two circular roof plates might be employed instead of one; presumably the building would then be apsidal at both ends. The reference to thatch patterns is interesting. It is to be noted that *maṇḍala* refers not to the circular shape of the building, but to the "circle" of those assembled in it.

It will now be obvious that the *kaṇṇikā* is made of wood, is connected with the rafters, and is to be seen from within the house by looking up (hence it cannot possibly be a "pinnacle," as hitherto commonly translated); it is the most honorable part of the house, and may bear a donor's inscription; it is probably always ornamented, very likely representing an inverted lotus. It is distinct from the rest of the roof. It is not obviously firmly fastened to the rafters, but they and it are interdependent, and support each other.

Only one possible architectural unit answers to these conditions, that is a roof-plate or patera. The perforating of *J. I*, 201 probably alludes to the cutting of slots in the margin of the *kaṇṇikā* to receive the ends of the rafters; once set in place, the rafters pressing inwards grip the



**kaṇṇikā** tightly, and on the other hand the **kaṇṇikā** itself keeps the rafters in place. Where a building is not simply circular, square, or octagonal, but barrel-vaulted with two apsidal ends,<sup>6</sup> there must be two (half) **kaṇṇikā**; on the other hand, in the case of a barrel-vaulted building with gable ends the rafters would rest directly against a ridge-pole (**kūṭa**), as at **Ajanṭā**, Cave XIX, or would simply meet above (as at **Aurangābād**, Cave IV) and no **kaṇṇikā** would be needed. In any case the meaning "circular roof plate," or "patera" must be regarded as definitely established for **kaṇṇikā** as an architectural term in Pali literature; taken collectively, the various allusions are singularly explicit.

The present discovery of the roof-plate as a typical architectural device in the construction of early domed or half-domed (apsidal) roofs is of considerable interest for the history of the dome in India. Like other wooden methods of construction, it would naturally have been copied in stone; only in making a solid dome, we should expect to find the stone "rafters" thinned and broadened out; and this is just what we see in the case of the little domed temple of the **Amarāvātī** relief illustrated in my *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 145, where it is evident that there must be a roof-plate (beneath the finial) against which the stone rafters rest. It will be observed that the principle is that of the true arch, and that the roof plate is effectively a keystone. Domed construction of this type has survived in India down to modern times.

Actual representations of the interiors of secular buildings are, of course, very rare or unknown in the early reliefs. But it is well known that the early rock-cut caitya-halls exactly reproduce wooden forms; and actually I have been able to find two or three examples in which a **kaṇṇikā** can be clearly seen. One of these, **Ajanṭā**, Cave XIX, reproduced in **Hürlimān**, *India*, Pl. 110, shows a small circular roof-plate which receives the upper ends of the rafters of the half-dome of the apse, while a long straight plate in similar fashion receives the ends of the rafters of the barrel-vaulted part of the roof. Another is Cave IV at **Aurangābād**, where in a photograph, so far unpublished, a semicircular roof plate, of half-**kaṇṇikā**, receives the apsidal rafters, while those of the barrel-vaulting meet above without a plate of any kind; similarly at **Kārī**. A majority of photographs of early caves do not show any of the roof details clearly, but it is almost a certainty that an examination *in situ* would reveal a circular or semicircular roof-plate wherever we have a dome or apsidal half-dome.

As an architectural unit our **kaṇṇikā** obviously corresponds to the central pendant so characteristic of later **Cālukyan** and **Solanki** architecture, but I am not able to say whether the term **kaṇṇikā** is actually used in this connection.



It is also obvious that the word may have other and related meanings; in the *Kāṃikāgama*, LIV, 37, 40, cited by Acharya, *Dictionary of Hindu Architecture*, s. v. *kaṇṇikā*, it is explained as meaning a swinging lotus pendant attached to the edge of the cornice (*kapota*).

It is necessary also to discuss briefly the meaning of *kūṭa*, which occurs so commonly in the combination *kūṭāgāra*. As the top, peak, or roof-ridge of a building, the meeting place of the rafters, *kūṭa* is partially synonymous with *kaṇṇikā*; and this is exemplified in *Jātaka* No. 347, entitled the *Ayakūṭa Jātaka* because in it there is mentioned a piece of iron "as big as a *kaṇṇikā*." Usually it is more specifically the horizontal ridge-pole or roof-plate against which rest the rafters of a building with a peaked or barrel-vaulted roof. This is just what is to be understood in *Miln.* 38 (ii. 1. 3) where we have "As the rafters (*gopānasiyo*) of a *kūṭāgāra* go up to the *kūṭa*, and are gathered together at the *kūṭa*, and the *kūṭa* is acknowledged to be the peak (*agga*) of all, so...." *Kūṭa* does not, as I formerly supposed (*JAOS.*, 48, 262), mean finial, but roof-ridge, etc. For finial we have (*puṇṇa*-)*ghaṭa*, *kalasa*, etc.; in *DhA.*, I, 414 a *pāsāda* has a golden *kūṭa* designed to carry sixty *udaka-ghaṭa*. Hence *kūṭāgāra* is not primarily a pinnacled hall, though this is also implied, but a building with a ridged or rounded, but not domed, roof; and the established translation "gabled hall" is probably the best that can be found: in any case a mansion, rather than a mere house, is to be understood. The *PTS Pālī Dictionary* equation *gaha-kūṭa*=*thūṇirā*=*kaṇṇikā* is not actually incorrect, but it should be remembered that the two first are horizontal beams, the last a circular roof-plate. When as in *DA.* I, 309, cited above, a *kūṭāgāra* has a *kaṇṇikā*, it must be assumed that a building with apsidal end or ends is meant, each such end requiring its (half-) *kaṇṇikā*; but it is just possible that here *kaṇṇikā* stands for *kūṭa*, since after all, the two are alike in function, though different in form.





## REFERENCES

1. Abbreviations as in Stede, *Pali Dictionary* p. xii.
2. Incidentally, we observe that a *kukku* must=26/11 *vidatthi* : *Vin.* III, 149 informs us that a *vidatthi*=twelve *angulas*, or "inches."  
The only other indication of the size is the vague reference in *J.* III, 146, to a mass of iron "as big as a *kaṇṇikā*."
3. Dalbergia sisu.
4. The *gopānasiyo* of a domed or barrel-vaulted roof are of course curved, as we see them reproduced in the interiors of *sela-cetiya-gharas*, but the curve (often used figuratively with reference to old people) is a single rounded curve, not like an inverted V as stated in the PTS *Pali Dictionary*. The rafters are bent, but not bent double.
5. The word occurs also at *DA.* I, 48; and *Miln.* 23, where it is a monastery hall in which an innumerable company of brethren is seated. *VbhA.* 366, explains it as a "rectangular *pāsāda* with one pinnacle (*kūṭa*). like a refectory (*bhojana-sālā*)." See also PTS *Pali Dictionary*, s. v. *māla* : *SnA.* 447 explains *māla* as *savitānaṃ maṇḍapaṃ*, "pavilion with an awning (or overhanging eaves)."
6. E. g. in the case of the larger *maṇḍala-mālā* described above.
7. An analogous simile occurs already in the *sāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, viii (=Aitareya Āraṇyaka, iii. 2. 1) : "Just as all the other beams (*vaṃśa*) rest on the main beam (*śālā-vaṃśa*), so the whole self rests on this breath." This enables us to translate *śālā-vaṃśa* more precisely as ridge-pole or roof-plate.





## Votive Sculptures Of Ancestors And Donors In Indian Art\*

In bringing together from varied sources evidences and examples of Indian portrait sculpture, in part hitherto unpublished, Mr. Aravamuthan has made a very notable contribution to our knowledge of Indian art in one of its more special applications, and consequently as a whole. It is to be hoped that the reception accorded to this study will encourage the author to pursue the study in this or other fields; for the field open to research is very large, and the number of students all too small.

There can be no possible doubt that throughout the period in which stone sculpture was produced, and probably still earlier when only impermanent materials were employed, images of donors were set up in connection with their foundations; indeed, for a very much earlier period we have the evidence of undoubted portrait figures in stone, excavated at Mohenjo Daro, though we do not know what was their precise cultural significance. The later portrait statues or reliefs were made and set up for somewhat varying ends, and in a variety of situations. We have, typically, the placing of figures representing donors set up in temples built and dedicated by themselves, or what amounts to the same thing, represented on a small scale on the pedestals of images erected by them, and fulfilling a purpose analogous to that of the usual donor's inscription. Then there are clear cases of the deification of royal ancestors,<sup>1</sup> whose posthumous images were set up in temples made by direct descendants, and made the object of a cult; the example of the statue of Sembianmaha-devi's statue set up by Rajendra-Cola-Deva I in A.D. 1020, with provision made for worship and offerings, is a case in point. The same queen had herself in A.D. 976 set up in relief in another temple the effigy of her deceased husband, as mentioned by Mr. Aravamuthan on p. 33. The image of Cola-madevi, probably a queen of Rajarajendra-cola-deva I, set up by Rajendra-cola-deva (r. A.D. 1018-1035), mentioned

\* Being A. K. Coomaraswamy's foreword to T. G. Aravamuthan's 'Portrait Sculpture in South India' (London 1931) pp. IX—XIII Boston, June 1, 1930)



on p. 37 and now published for the first time in Fig. 12, seems to be the oldest closely and positively dateable south Indian metal image extant.

Again we have the case of the images of deceased members of the royal family placed in their *chattris*, which are effectively ancestral mortuary chapels. Beside this, we have the explicit evidence in Bhasa's *Pratima-Nataka*, Act III, of the practice of setting up the images of ancestors in a building, called *devakula* and *pratima-griha*, especially built for the purpose. From the play we learn that worship was offered to the images. The excellence of the workmanship and the "feeling" (*bhava*) embodied in the figures are remarked upon; they produce a delight (*praharsha*) in the mind. It can hardly be doubted that the *devakula* at Mathura, which contained the portrait statues of Kanishka and Kashtana, must have been of this kind.

It seems to me that as regards the term "portrait statues," the available examples in almost every case ought to be called effigies rather than portraits in the ordinary sense of the word; they do as a rule reproduce the details of contemporary costume, but as representations they are types rather than individualised portraits. It is noteworthy that in the *Pratima-Nataka*, Bharata is not only unable to recognise the statue of his own father, but cannot tell whether the figures in the *devakula* represent gods or human beings, though the latter view is suggested to his mind by the fact that they are not provided with any distinctive attributes. In any case the extant figures certainly cannot be said to disprove "the theory of Hindu disinclination to realism." In this connection reference may be made to Śukrācārya, Śukranītisāra, IV.4.76, where the making of likenesses of mortals "even with their characteristic features accurately depicted" is called *asvargya* "not leading to heaven." On the other hand, this very passage is evidence that portraits were actually made; and we must not forget that there is ample literary evidence for the making of realistic, that is easily recognizable, painted portraits, at least from the Gupta period onwards,<sup>2</sup> and that such portraits are extant from the seventeenth century onwards.

Mr. Aravamuthan does not take up the question of the representation of royal ancestors or other deified persons in the form of the deity to whom they were devoted in life, hence apparently sometimes in the form of a *lingam*, so usual in Cambodia. Was this custom of setting up posthumous or even contemporary effigies in a form indistinguishable from that of a deity of Indian derivation or a local development? The problem deserves to be thoroughly investigated. The custom may at least be cited of setting up a *lingam* on the *Samādhi* of a deceased saint or teacher, thus "In the case of *sannyāsins*..... a raised masonry platform is sometimes set up over the place of burial as



though to proclaim to the world that the body buried below has attained to the sacred form of Siva-linga.”<sup>3</sup>

The identification of the Parkham and related archaic statues as portrait figures of kings of the fifth century B.C. (p. I of.) is so doubtful that it might have been better to dismiss the subject with a brief allusion. But there exist some very remarkable royal portrait heads, certainly of Maurya date, to which Mr. Aravamuthan has not referred; these were found at Sarnath,<sup>4</sup> and are more individualised than any other known examples of Indian sculpture. The worshipping figures of Cunningham, *Stupa of Bharhut*, Pl. V, are almost certainly effigies of royal donors. The splendid figure of an Andhra king now reproduced for the first time in a more complete state, though still unfortunately headless,<sup>5</sup> is certainly misdated; a comparison with Cunningham, *loc. cit.*, Pl. XXII, fig. I, together with stylistic and other considerations (details of the costume, and the abrupt transition from the frontal to the lateral planes) make it impossible to place this figure later than the second century B.C.; Bachhofer, *loc. cit.*, Pl. 109, suggests “about 100 B.C.” With this figure too there should be compared another early effigy relief from Amaravati reproduced by Bachhofer on the same Plate, and certainly the representation of a particular individual. Nor can the miniature representation of a worshipping figure on an equally ancient *pakara* slab relief from Jaggayyapeta<sup>6</sup> be described in any other way than as the effigy of a donor.

In Merutunga’s *Prabandhaçintāmaṇi* there are several references to the setting up of effigies of human beings. Thus, Tawney’s translation, p. 19, a king establishes an image of *Pārśvanātha*, “furnished with a statue of himself as a worshipper.” *Ib.*, p. 90, another king, having completed a temple, “caused to be made figures of distinguished kings, lords of horses, lords of elephants, and lords of men, and so forth, and caused to be placed in front of them his own statue, with its hands joined in an attitude of supplication.” *Ib.*, p. 159, *Vāstupāla*, in A.D. 1250 established amongst the *Nandīśvara* shrines of *Śatruñjaya* “statues of *Lavanaprāsāda* (the reigning king’s father) and of *Vīradhavalā* (the reigning king) on elephants, and his own statue on horseback; in the same place, seven statues of his forefathers and seven statues of spiritual guides; in a courtyard near, the statues of his two elder brothers the great ministers *Malavadeva* and *Luniga* in the attitude of worship.....”

There can be no doubt that an adequate examination of Indian literature would reveal very many more such cases, or that the number of such human images still surviving is very much larger than has hitherto been supposed. The reader of the present book should not fail to consult also Mr. Aravamuthan’s *South Indian Portraits in Stone and Metal* (London, 1930).



## REFERENCES

6. Burgess, BSAJ., Pl. LV. fig. 2.
7. At Anahillapura's from Forbes, *Ras Mala*, p. 29, it would appear that the king's image is still extant in the shrine.



# Understanding The Art Of India\*

Works of art have been thought of in two very different ways. According to the modern view the artist is a special or even abnormal kind of man, endowed with a peculiar emotional sensibility which enables him to see what we call beauty; moved by a mysterious aesthetic urge he produces paintings, sculpture, poetry or music. These are regarded as a spectacle for the eyes or a gratification for the ear; they can only be enjoyed by those who are called lovers of art and these are understood to be temperamentally related to the artist but without his technical ability. Other men are called workmen and make things which everyone needs for use; these workmen are expected to enjoy art, if they are able, only in their spare time.

In ideal art, the artist tries to improve upon nature. For the rest, the truth of the work of art is held to be its truth to an external world which we call nature, and expect the artist to observe. In this kind of art there is always a demand for novelty. The artist is an individual, expressing himself, and so it has become necessary to have books written about every artist individually, for since each makes use of an individual language, each requires explanation. Very often a biography is substituted for the explanation. Great importance is attached to what we call genius, and less to training. Art history is chiefly a matter of finding out the names of artists and considering their relation to one another. The work of art itself is an arrangement of colours or sounds, adjudged good or bad according to whether these arrangements are pleasing or otherwise. The meaning of the work of art is of no significance; those or who are interested in such merely human matter are called Philistines.

This point of view belongs only to the last few centuries in Europe, and to the decadence of classical civilisation in the Mediterranean. It has not been endorsed by humanity at large, and may be quite a false view. According to another and quite different assumption, which prevailed throughout the Middle Ages in Europe and is in fact proper to the Christian as well as the Hindu philosophy of life, art is primarily an intellectual act; it is the

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conception of form, corresponding to an idea in the mind of the artist. It is not when he observes nature with curiosity, but when the intellect is self-poised, that the forms of art are conceived. The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist, or else is something less than a man. The engineer and the cook, the mathematician and the surgeon are also artists. Everything made by man or done skilfully is a work of art, a thing made by art, artificial.

The things to be made by art in imitation of the imagined forms in the mind of the artist are called true when these imagined forms are really embodied and reproduced in the wood or stone or in the sounds which are the artist's material. He has always in view to make some definite thing, not merely something beautiful, no matter what; what he loves is the particular thing he is making; he knows that anything well and truly made will be beautiful. Just what is to be made is a matter for the patron to decide; the artist himself if he is building his own house, or another person who needs a house, or in the broadest sense the patron, is the artist's whole human environment, for example when he is building a temple or laying out a city. In unanimous societies, as in India, there is general agreement as to what is most needed; the artist's work is therefore generally understood; where everyone makes daily use of works of art there is little occasion for museums, books or lectures on the appreciation of art.

The thing to be made, then, is always something humanly useful. No rational being works for indefinite ends. If the artist makes a table, it is to put things on; if he makes an image, it is as a support for contemplation. There is no division of fine or useless from decorative and useful arts; the table is made to give intellectual pleasure as well as to support a weight, the image gives sensual, or as some prefer to call it, aesthetic pleasure at the same time that it provides a support for contemplation. There is no caste division of the artist from the workman such as we are inured to in industrial societies where, as Ruskin so well expressed it, "Industry without art is brutality."

In this kind of art there is no demand for novelty, because the fundamental needs of humanity are always and everywhere the same. What is required is originality, or vitality. What we mean by "original" is "coming from its source within," like water from a spring. The artist can only express what is in him, what he is. It makes no difference whether or not the same thing has been expressed a thousand times before. There can be no property in ideas. The individual does not make them, but finds them; let him only see to it that he really takes possession of them, and his work will be original in the same sense that the recurrent seasons, sunrise and sunset, are ever new although in name



the same. The highest purpose of Christian and Eastern art alike is to reveal that one and the same principle of life that is manifested in all variety. Only modern art, reflecting modern interests, pursues variety for its own sake and ignores the sameness on which it depends.

Finally, the Indian artist, although a person, is not a personality; his personal idiosyncrasy is at the most a part of his equipment, and never the occasion of his art. All of the greatest Indian works are anonymous, and all that we know of the lives of Indian artists in any field could be printed in a tract of a dozen pages.

Let us now consider for a short time the history of Indian art. Our knowledge of it begins about 3000 B. C. with what is known as the Indus Valley culture. Extensive cities with well-built houses and an elaborate drainage system have been excavated and studied. The highest degree of artistic ability can be recognized in the engraved seals, sculptured figures in the round, finely wrought jewelry, silver and bronze vessels, and painted pottery. From the Rig Veda, the Bible of India, datable in its present form about 1000 B.C., we learn a good deal about the arts of the carpenter, weaver, and jeweller.

The more familiar Indian art of the historical period has been preserved abundantly from the third century B. C. onwards. The greater part of what has survived consists of religious architecture and sculpture, together with some paintings, coins, and engraved seals. The sculptures have been executed in the hardest stone with steel tools. From the sculptures and paintings themselves we can gather a more detailed knowledge of the other arts. The temples are often as large as European cathedrals. Almost peculiar to India has been the practice of carving out such churches in the living rock, the monolithic forms repeating those of the structural buildings. Amongst notable principles early developed in India which have had a marked influence on the development of architecture in the world at large are those of the horse-shoe arch, and transverse vault.

An increasing use is made of sculpture. As in other countries, there is a stylistic sequence of primitive, classical, and baroque types. The primitive style of Bharhut and Sanchi can hardly be surpassed in significance, and may well be preferred for the very reason that it restricts itself to the statement of absolute essentials, and is content to point out a direction which the spectator must follow for himself. Nevertheless, in many ways the Gupta period, from the 4th to the 6th centuries A. D., may be said to represent the zenith of Indian art. By this time the artist is in full and facile command of all his resources. The paintings of Ajanta, approximately comparable to those of the very early Renaissance in Europe, depict with irresistible enchantment a civili-



sation in which the conflict of spirit and matter has been resolved in an accord such as has hardly been realised anywhere else, unless perhaps in the Far East and in Egypt. Spirituality and sensuality are here inseparably linked, and seem to be merely the inner and outer aspects of one and the same expanding life. The art of this age is classical not merely within the geographical limits of India proper, but for the Far East, where all the types of Buddhist art are of Indian origin.

There follows a mediaeval period, which was essentially an age of devotion, learning, and chivalry ; the patronage of art and literature moving together as a matter of course.

From the twelfth century onwards, the situation is profoundly modified, so far as the North of India is concerned, by the impact of Muhammadan invasions, of Persian and Central Asian origin. But while the effects of these invasions were to an appalling extent destructive, the Islamic art added something real and valuable to that of India ; and finally, though only for a short time, under the Great Mughals in the 16th and 17th centuries, there developed in India a new kind of life which found expression in a magnificent architecture and a great school of painting. Just because of its more humanistic and worldly preoccupations, this art is better known to and better appreciated by Europeans at the present day than is the more profound art of Hindu India. Everyone has heard of the Taj Mahal, a wonder of inlaid marble built by Shah Jahan to be the tomb of a beloved wife ; everyone can easily understand and therefore admire the Mughal paintings that provide us with a faithful portrait gallery of all the great men of Northern Indian during a period of two centuries. This is a kind of art that really corresponds to that of the late Renaissance, with all its personal, historic and romantic interests.

In the meantime, Hindu culture persisted almost unchanged. In the great temple cities of the South both the reality and the outward aspects of the ancient world have survived until now, and the world has no more wonderful spectacle to offer than can be seen here. In the North, Hindu culture survived too in Rajputana and the Punjab Himalayas, and here, in direct continuity with ancient tradition, there developed the two schools of Rajput painting that are the last great expressions of the Indian spirit in painting or sculpture. Modern developments in Bengal and Bombay represent attempts either to recover a lost tradition, or for the development of an eclectic style, neither wholly Indian nor wholly European. At the present day the Indian genius is finding expression rather in the field of conduct than in art.

European influence on Indian art has been almost purely destructive : In the first place, by undermining the bases of patronage, removing by default the



traditional responsibilities of wealth to learning. Secondly, the impact of industrialism, similarly undermining the status of the responsible craftsman, has left the consumer at the mercy of the profiteer, and no better off than he is in Europe. Thirdly, by the introduction of new styles and fashions, imposed by the prestige of power, and which the Indian people have not been in a position to resist. A reaction against these influences is taking place at the present day, but can never replace what has been lost ; India has been profoundly impoverished, intellectually as well as economically, within the last hundred years.

Even in India, an understanding of the art of India has to be rewon; and for this, just as in Europe where the modern man is as far from understanding the art of the Middle Ages as he is from that of the East, a veritable intellectual rectification is required. What is needed in either case is to place oneself in the position of the artist by whom the unfamiliar work was made : to think their thoughts and to see with their eyes. For so long as the work of art appears to us in any way exotic, bizarre, quaint, or arbitrary. we cannot pretend to have understood it. It is not to enlarge our collection of bric-a-brac that we ought to study ancient or foreign arts, but to enlarge our own consciousness of being.

As regards India it has been said that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." This is a counsel of despair that can only have been born of the most profound disillusion, and the deepest conviction of impotence. I say on the contrary that human nature is an unchanging and everlasting principle ; and that whoever possesses such a nature—and not merely the outward form and habits of the human animal—is endowed with the power of understanding all that belongs to that nature, without respect to time or place.





## What is Common to Indian and Chinese Art\*?

This theme requires a course of lectures, rather than one only. Our object is to distinguish what is essential from what is accidental in the field to be discussed, and it will appear that this can only be done by a resort to first principles, and not by discursive reasoning. We have first to demonstrate what is taken for granted in the title, that despite superficial differences and independence of development, Chinese and Indian civilizations are really commensurable (so far, equating civilization with style, art in the broadest sense); then to discuss some parallels in the aesthetic field more narrowly defined.

As to commensurability : Evidently, both Chinese and Indian civilizations are alike in that they live in and by tradition. And further, in that the tradition is metaphysical, that is, as to first principles, intellect being defined as the habit of first principles. On the other hand, Chinese and Indian civilizations are only accidentally religious, that is to say, emotional or ordered to edification, and only accidentally scientific, viz., to the degree that discursive knowledge has been necessary to the development of certain techniques.

The commensurability of Chinese and Indian culture can be demonstrated not only as immediate between themselves but also in their common incommensurability with respect to European culture. A comparison with Europe will be of use, because from what is known, there can be gained some notion of what is unknown and different. It must be emphasized, however : *first*, that a comparison with Europe means with Europe since the Renaissance—a comparison of the Orient with Europe of the thirteenth century would have had to be made in quite a different way, and would be less instructive from the present point of view; *second*, that whatever is said in a derogatory sense of post-Renaissance Europe, is so only from a certain point of view, and said rather descriptively than critically from this, the Oriental point of view, *Finally*,

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in saying "Oriental", I refer of course to the essential Orient, not to a quite modern Orient as affected more or less by European contacts.

As to a comparison of the Orient with late classical and post-Renaissance Europe—here there is no commensurability, but only contrast. No valid comparison of Taoism or Hinduism with Greco-Roman religion or with Protestantism could be made, nor of Taoism or the *Vedānta* with modern philosophy. Oriental civilizations are based on universals, and argue by induction from the infinite to the particular, while western civilizations, at least in their classical and modern aspects, are mainly concerned with the general, which is only an extension of the particular by deduction. For example, the Greeks had no conception of the infinite, but only of the indefinite (*e. g.*, of the everlasting as distinct from the timeless); therefore to the Greek mentality the *finite* (that which is not indefinite) and the *perfect* are necessarily synonymous; whereas in the Orient, only the infinite and indefinable can be thought of as perfect. Hence while it is easy for the Orient to understand the West, the contrary is rarely possible; or at the least demands a movement of the will and an intellectual operation additional to the work of scholarship as ordinarily conceived.

Let us now compare China and India, and both with "Europe" in certain general respects, taking into account that specific similarities are usually in the nature of accidents, to be explained historically and by derivation, while specific *dis*-similarities often conceal true formal resemblances which need not be accounted for by historical contacts, and are only partially to be accounted for by a community of traditional origins in a pre-historic past.

*Theory*, in the Orient, as the map of life, has to be contrasted with philosophy in the West, conceived as a body of consistent statements about physical and mental experience. Oriental metaphysics are not an escape, but means to the fullness of life, the total realization of all being. Metaphysical truth, for example in its doctrine as to perfectibility and as to multiple states of being, is immediate knowledge in the realm of universals; is not by way of faith or opinion (*i.e.*, embodies no sentimental elements); is not dependent on any special mode of investigation; it is impossible that any discoveries of new and different first principles could be made, but only that particular aspects of their consequences should be more fully developed. This excludes the historical point of view, except as to its value in the field of secular accident and private interest.

The whole modern concept of absolute progress, or of evolution as anything more than a course of events, is ruled out, and we find in its place a concept of equilibrium: expressed in an ordering of life after the operation of the Universe, or if we prefer, conformably to the will of God. This is not in



any sense a kind of fatalism, but a pre-eminent activity; it is in fact fundamental to Oriental metaphysics that knowledge, love, and art exist only in act. Where Europe is preoccupied with change, as it were of place, the Orient lives by an interior movement. Illustrating what we mean, and using the language of religion, "the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters". Now, it cannot be pretended that God, Who is without potentialities, but is all act, is not here conceived of as vitally existent, and "active"; yet the movement of the spirit is properly explained by St. Augustine as not a movement of place, that is to say not a change. In an analogous sense we speak of movement (Chinese *yūn*, Sanskrit *dhvanana*, English "rhythm") in a work of art which in movement is not an alteration. Conservatism, then, will be the most necessary accident in a traditional culture, that is, whenever a social order has been successfully found in First Principles, or what we should now call a purely theoretical (which has nothing in common with "arbitrary") basis.

From the Oriental point of view, the ultimate object of all effort, man's true end, is the realization of that state of timeless perfection and invulnerable happiness which is always his virtually, but is obscured by his affections and mistaken ideologies. This goal, of the realization of the full potentiality of being, has very little in common with the Western conception of immortality and salvation, such ends being definitely limited and illustrating very well what we mean by the general as merely an extension of the particular. Accordingly, the Orient could not conceive of a science for science's sake or an art for art's sake, but only of science and art in so far as they can be used as means to the end of realization.

It is true that in so far as particular aspects of the truth may be explored at one time or another, a history of such developments in thought will be conceivable and may have a certain value. But the truth as a whole is an eternal, ever accessible, infinity, incapable as such of any improvement or advancement; the wise man is therefore not interested in the history of aspects, but only in the validity of a given statement as a means conducive to the realization of invulnerable happiness. So we must not be surprised that equally in India and China it would be an insult to a thinker to praise the novelty or originality of his ideas, or his independence of authority, nor surprised at his acceptance of anonymity or pseudonymity; or to observe that good form, in any and every sense of the word, consists in adherence to custom and precedent. The energies of the scholar are not expended in higher criticism, but in ensuring the accurate preservation of traditional wisdom, either by technical means such as mnemonic systems or codes of rules, or by exegesis. "Correction" of a tradition is only possible by the rejection of any statement found to be inconsistent with First Principles and is therefore "non-tradition" even though it may



have crept into a canonized text : but such interpolation is rare, and "correction" by this absolute standard (Chinese **cheng**, Sanskrit **pramāṇa**) means in practice exclusion from the canon of what is not consistent with First Principles. As to *who* was the author of a particular text, the date of the work, or any details of his biography, this can have only a curiosity value; and it is precisely for this reason that such inquiries which bulk so largely in Western scholarship have really their proper place only there, where the tradition itself is considered as a curiosity, and not as the map of life and a means to the attainment of higher and less limited planes of consciousness.

In the modern world I can illustrate this point of view only in the isolated field of religion, where, at least in the Roman church, a tradition survives : pointing out that for the Christian priest to propound a new theology, or expect to be praised for so doing, would be inherently absurd. But Oriental civilizations are not merely traditional in their religious aspects (such aspects being indeed secondary and accidental rather than primary and essential, and certainly not more significant than the aesthetic aspects), but *throughout*; hence it would be no less an aberration and extravagance for a Chinese to abandon filial piety, or for a Hindu by way of deliberate revolt to break the taboos of caste, than for the Christian priest to institute a heresy. It is then the major strength of Oriental cultures to have remained true to the first principles, which are those of their actual being : their major weakness, a slackening of concentration which has in modern times (under the almost irresistible pressure of barbarian contacts) conduced to a partial corruption of their purity. Even such a partial corruption can only be envisaged from the Oriental point of view as a disastrous extravagance. Nor could the idea of reform, from the Oriental point of view, have any other than its purely etymological significance : just as the soul is said to be the *form* of the body, so to *re-form* the state can only mean to impress again upon its substance the stamp of its own nature.

Again in their conception of nationality, or rather lack of this conception, China and India are alike. With the forced reactions of the present day, which can only be regarded as a necessary mechanism of defense against Western aggression, imperialistic and cultural, we are not now concerned. In place of patriotism we find a sense of ancestral solidarity, a conception of the past and even of the future as virtually present. Just as in Europe Christian scholasticism conceived an universal state, a City of God, so for such traditional cultures as India or China, no other conception was possible than that of a single sovereign state consisting of all those connected by pure descent, these alone being *capable* of initiation and conformity. Internationalism on the contrary is a generalization from nationalism, and means a sort of federation of incompatibles : in the Universal State all men are compatible, though not all "equal".



The possible existence of such a state will depend, of course, on the traditional character of its internal order, not on ethnic or political unity. Whereas you may and perhaps must now be an American first and a Christian afterwards, the Oriental is Confucian or Hindu first, and a Chinese or Indian afterwards. For to be a Confucian or Hindu means from the Chinese or Indian point of view to be fully human, and thus represents a concept much less limited than that of national species. On the other hand, those external to the universal state can only be regarded collectively as "barbarians" or "pagans," individually to be well treated, but not as members of independent and potentially equal "nations". It is no more possible for an uncorrupted Chinese or Indian to regard an outsider as his equal than for a Jew to do so : the fact of birth beyond the pale is *prima facie* proof of spiritual and intellectual inferiority, and the Oriental theory may be said to have been fully demonstrated in respect to their experience of Europeans, whom they can recognize as men, but not as essentially human, of course with individual exceptions.

In this connection I must allude to a question that has been asked : "Why do the Japanese look down upon the Chinese ?" (Although the greater part of Japanese civilization is of Chinese origin). The answer is : "for the same reason that Europeans look down upon all Orientals", that is, being unable or unwilling to look up to them. For the Japanese are only a degree less than Europe incommensurable with Asia proper : their nature, despite its outward acceptance of Asiatic form (facilitated by proximity), being as it were more European than Asiatic in kind. Both Europe and Japan are to be described, geographically and culturally, as extensions of Asia. Consciously or unconsciously both have always depended upon Asia as the actual source of all the formal and traditional elements of their culture; and if conditions have now to all appearances been reversed, this holds good only in respect to material achievement, and not in the realm of the intellect (defined as the habit of first principles). Now having come into almost unlimited secular power, even though at the price of intellectuality, Europe and Japan are alike afflicted with adolescent paranoia, these afflictions finding natural expression in the essentially inhuman concept of nationality and in such racial prejudices as the concept of nationality requires for its support.

To resume : neither in China nor in India can an insult to the country or the flag be felt as such : but an insult to the ancestors, to symbols of truth, or any forced infringement of the traditional order, may readily provoke bloodshed, precisely because such things are felt to be, what indeed they are, a denial of essential humanity. Western nations have yet to learn what poison lurks in the phrases "nationality" and "patriotism", than which religious intolerance might well be regarded as more acceptable.



What we call religious tolerance, here and now, would be expressed in Asia as a due sense of the validity of other persuasions than one's own. Here again we meet with an illustration of the incommensurability of Oriental and European cultures, and the essential unity of the Chinese and Indian points of view. For whereas in Europe tolerance was only gradually and painfully achieved with the growth of scepticism, and then only as a negative concept, religious tolerance in Asia has prevailed *ab initio*, so far as we know, and arose directly and inevitably from the positive principle that, given the greatness of the infinite, and the diversity of human endowment, it is *necessary* that God should be understood and worshipped in many different ways. Nor could, the same consistency be expected in religion as in pure metaphysics, inasmuch as religion in any case represents an accommodation to human limitations, and is in this sense accidental. With some minor exceptions, particularly in the case of Buddhism, which is a heterodox development, it may be asserted that no Oriental naturally feels any urge to convert any other person to his own point of view. According to Chuang Tzu, the Perfect Man, instead of trying to lead others to adopt his own views, agrees with theirs; he who tries to share his joys with others is by no means a Perfect Man, as he is perfect whose kindness has no root in natural affection. These ideas are not less Indian than Chinese.

The different systems are not even conceived to be contradictory in that any choice between them is imposed of necessity on any individual. It is well known that a Chinese may be at one and the same time a Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist, and even also a Christian, and even practise the ritual of all these points of view, much in the same way that you might be a Republican and astronomer at the same time; while in India the so-called Six Systems, or Points of View, are no more mutually contradictory than are, let us say, chemistry and grammar. The Hindu may be at one and the same time metaphysician and worshipper, without confusion. An Oriental might even teach Christianity sincerely, without becoming a "Christian". The urge of the missionary to effect religious conversion, or of educators in general to educate the Orient in scientific, moral, or aesthetic respects, can only be conceived by a purely Oriental consciousness as the best amongst the variously deplorable impulses by which the conduct of Western barbarians is governed. That point of view which is naturally common to India and China I may illustrate as follows: Were an Indian in discussion with a Christian, it would not be with a view to make him a Hindu by name, but to bring to the support of Christian theology the aid of Oriental metaphysics, in the sense that Aristotle proved an invaluable aid to the Schoolmen; being convinced that whereas differences of faith might exist, only identity could be demonstrated as between the metaphysical part of Christian theology, and the metaphysical tradition elsewhere. And in fact, the reluctance of Orientals to engage in propaganda without reference to the nature of the



pupil would appear to be fully justified by the growth of such pseudo-religions as Theosophy and Neo-Vedantism; and equally clearly in the aesthetic field, inasmuch as one could not cite amongst numerous types of modern art under Oriental influence anything but curiosities and caricatures—merely to mention Oriental dancing as practised in America will suffice.

As to the Chinese and Indian social systems, the differences are real, and yet more apparent than real, for both are ultimately founded in first principles. It would require a whole lecture to discuss this, but from our point of view it is only necessary to note that the art of life is in both cases ordered by a conception of *types of conduct* correct under given conditions, not on lines of individual self-assertion or competition. The individual is outwardly moulded to a pattern and thereby inwardly freed; rules, at least in their origin, being nothing more than the proper form assumed by freedom. The resulting order, as an aesthetic spectacle, is in sharp contrast with the conflict and *disorder* which result from the undisciplined expression of individual imperfection in a democracy, where every opinion amounts to a distinct law. Time does not permit us to discuss the Hindu concept of *pramāṇa* which in its relation to art means "norm of properly conceived form", *correction du savoir-voir*, and can be thought of as a kind of aesthetic conscience : Hsuan-Tsang's rendering is *cheng*.

If, then China and India are alike in their conservatism, in their respect for antiquity, in their neglect of science and history, in their indifference to the idea of the nation, in their lack of patriotism, and in the formality (non-individualism) of their culture : and contrasted with Europe in all these respects, which are the characteristic marks of traditional orders, we may consider it established that Chinese and Indian civilizations are really commensurable and comparable. Let us now undertake the comparison in the aesthetic field, more strictly defined.

It will be indispensable first of all to refer to an aspect of Chinese art that *is* at once accidental in character and due to contact and influence in the accepted sense of the historians. I refer to Chinese Buddhist art in its religious aspect as iconography. The problem concerns only brief periods, relatively speaking, in the course of Chinese history, the first Wei-T'ang, when the theistic Buddhism of the *Mahāyāna*, predominates, the second Sung-Ming when Lamaistic Buddhist art constitutes a minor style by the side of other and more significant schools. In both cases the iconography of the art was necessarily a borrowed one, of Western origin, the West in this case meaning Central Asia and India, and to a less degree a partially Hellenized Western Asia. The net result of these contacts is apparent from our point of view in the familiar general resemblance of Chinese and Indian Buddhist images; though the Chinese art is always Chinese in style. Such likeness is the result of contacts,



which might have had similar effects even though the Chinese and Indian mentalities had been fundamentally *incommensurable*. Suppose now that we think away all specifically Buddhist religious art from China (Ch'an-Zen being only by designation and association Buddhist, but really metaphysical and not religious in its essence); there will remain an even more impressive body of purely Chinese art, continuously produced during a vastly greater period of time. It is this purely Chinese art that we have to compare with the art of India, where it is equally true that Buddhism and Buddhist art represent no more than an episode, of only secondary significance when compared with the central tradition from which its aesthetic vocabulary is entirely borrowed. So then we shall exclude from our discussion of the essential correspondances of Chinese and Indian art all that we have defined as Buddhist religious art; only with this warning, that is so far as we may propose to study the history of Chinese Buddhist art, a more thorough knowledge of Indian Buddhism and Indian Buddhist art is required than is always realized by Sinologists in this field.

Ch'an-Zen, which is not a religion, but a metaphysical tradition, and Zen art, are of another order, more directly founded in first principles: Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese *Ch'an* and Indian *dhyanā*. *Dhyanā* is the Indian practise of Yoga, which is designed to accomplish the realization of more enfranchised states of being, and a consequently greater facility of conduct: the method consisting essentially in visual concentration leading to immediate knowledge by identification of subject and object, all particular distractions being eliminated. For example, in art, a mental image thus realized in identity becomes the artist's model: this model, which is "the art in the artist," being the exemplar to which the actual handiwork of the artist is ordered, to the exclusion of "direct observation of nature." It follows, of course, that the history of style in China and India cannot be discussed in terms of optical plausibility, degrees of observation, or the like, but only in terms of varying energy. From the Hindu point of view, for example, defective art is the result, not of the neglect of observation, but of slack concentration (*śithila samādhi*). I have explained this matter more fully in the "Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia": here will only adduce by way of parallel the saying of Chuang Tsū, that "the mind of the sage being at rest, becomes the mirror of the universe."

Like Yoga, *Ch'an* or Zen is a "Way" applicable to every aspect of life. As developed in the Far East (simultaneously on Indian and Taoist premises) it may be described as the attempt to realize perfection in purity or simplicity of action; a direct relation, so to speak, being established between the pure intellect (the habit of First Principles) and the making and doing of anything. This corresponds to the Indian conception of enfranchisement through action (*karma-yoga*).



that is action without attachment (=non-action), defining Yoga as "skill in action", *karmasu kāuśala* (*Bhagavad Gītā*, II, 50). Translated into religious terms, we should have to say action with surrender to the will of God, and without prudential considerations.

Probably because of the Indian origin of the name *Ch'an* or Zen, and the great fame of Bodhidharma (Daruma), the greatest Indian teacher of Yoga and *Vedānta* in China, it has been usual to think of *Ch'an-Zen* as representing the principle almost wholly of Indian origin. But this is very greatly to underestimate the importance of the Chinese sources. The Indian contribution was not in this case an influence bringing to China something in itself new (as the Buddhist religion had been), but served as it were to remind the Chinese consciousness of its proper *intellectual* (Taoist) inheritance, which during the theistic Buddhist period had been brought down to the level of a magical science. Even to the large extent that *Ch'an-Zen* has Indian roots, its manifestation in art is not of the kind commonly ascribed to "influence," *Ch'an-Zen* art having no obvious relation to Indian art of any kind. Styles must in fact vary like religions according to time and place, even when principles and themes are identical; after the familiar principle, that the thing known must exist in the knower according to the mode of the knower.

All that is then required for present purposes is to demonstrate from pre-*Ch'an* sources the essential likeness of Tao (as "Way") and as the doctrine of the First Principle of Yoga and *Vedānta* in the same sense. A very few examples will suffice : Chuang Tzu (Giles, p 240) gives an excellent account of the working of Yoga (though not so called) in connection with the carpenter making a wooden stand for musical instruments, and asked "What mystery is there in your art ?". He replies : "No mystery, your Highness, and yet there is something. When I am about to make such a stand....I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence....I become oblivious of any reward to be gained....of any fame to be acquired....unconscious of my physical frame. Then, with no thought of the Court present to my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone. I enter some mountain forest. I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then set to work."

And as to habit (*habitus*, *tao* as "way") : "Let me take an illustration", said the wheelwright, "from my own trade. In making a wheel, if you work too slowly, you can't make it firm; if you work too fast, the spokes won't fit in. You must go neither too slowly nor too fast. There must be coordination of mind and hand. Words cannot explain what it is, but there is some mysterious art herein. I cannot teach it to my son; nor can he learn it from me. Conse-



ently, though seventy years of age, I am still making wheels in my old age." (*ib.*, p. 271). Similarly with the sword maker : "Is it your skill, Sir, or have you a way ?" "It is concentration.....If a thing was not a sword, I did not notice it. I availed myself of whatever energy I did not use in other directions in order to secure greater efficiency in the direction required." (*ib.*, p. 290). In India, similarly, we find the philosopher exclaim : "I have learnt concentration from the maker of arrows", who sees nothing but the act in which he is absorbed; the author, practising yoga vision and seeing his work complete in every detail before he proceeds to transcription; while the image maker must be "expert in **yoga-dhyāna**, for thus and in no other way, and verily not by direct observation, can the end be attained." (**Śukran-tisāra**, IV, 72).

To say as above "before Ch'an or Zen" is not really permissible, because a tradition cannot be thought of as having a beginning; by pre-Ch'an we mean then only "before the designation and style as we know it had been developed." In this sense, before Ch'an-Zen, Chinese like Indian art had been symbolic, presenting itself clearly as such in the ancient Chinese bronzes and jades, and old Indian art of the Water Cosmology. Theistic Buddhist art is itself symbolic in the sense that religion is always a symbolic statement of first principles, but our allusion is rather to the direct symbolic representation of these First Principles, such direct symbols, *e. g.*, those of the *Tien* and *Ti*, being more often geometrical, vegetable, or theriomorphic than anthropomorphic. The wide-spread distribution of identical symbols at very ancient levels is itself one of the chief empirical evidences of the antiquity of metaphysical tradition, which we are thus led to push back at least to the fourth millennium B. C. Such symbols in so far as they represent principles are without sentimental or moral connotation, but with the development of anthropomorphic religions have naturally come also to designate personal powers. Alike from the Chinese and Indian point of view, their origin is prehistoric; and although similar in source, may assume apparently very distinct forms, as in the case of the Chinese dragon and Indian **nāga** or Chinese phoenix and Indian **Garuḍa**.

There exist alike in India and China related symbols denoting the fundamental poles of being connected by opposite relation, and which by their unity and by their relation are the source of all procession, or in religious language, of creation. These fundamental poles of being are designated in China as Heaven and Earth, Yang and Yin, in India as **Puruṣa** and **Śakti**, or religiously as **Śiva** and **Śakti**, **Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa**, etc. From those modalities of the first principle proceeds the breath of life, *Ch'i*, Indian **prāṇa**, or considered as by Moncius, as the principle, of desire, the will to life, Indian **Kāma**. These primary principles, and all the secondary principles proceeding from them, constitute the *types* of sentient being which are so to speak the cause of explanation of



natural appearances in time and space, and so become the proper theme of art, which presumes to return phenomena from their sensible to their intelligible aspects. The consequences of this point of view extend even to portraiture, equally in China and India, as I have explained in the "Introduction."\*

The development of Ch'an-Zen art presents us precisely with a transition from a formally symbolic art of this kind to an introsusceptive or imagist art in which the appearance and form of an object are so completely identified that the thing may be said to mean what it is, and to be what it means, in a simultaneous act of sense and intellect. The nature of the subject becomes here altogether indifferent; the representation of a caterpillar may be significant as that of a man or deity, and *vice-versa*, because all meaning and all being are omnipresent, though according to the *mode* of the individual reflection.

The scripture of Zen "is written with the characters of heaven, of man, of beasts, of demons, of hundreds of blades of grass, and of thousands of trees" (Dogen), "every flower exhibits the image of Buddha" (Dugo) : with the constantly emphasized view that all scripture is vain, *cf.* St. Bernard's *Ligna et Lapides docebunt te, quod a magistris audire non posse* and innumerable assertions of the mystics, such as Ekhart's "Any flea as it is in God is nobler than the highest of the angels as he is in himself."

In art, the symbolic and introsusceptive points of view are to be seen side by side in the following extract from a twelfth century Chinese author writing on animal painting :

"The horse is used as a symbol of the sky, its even pace prefiguring the even motion of the stars; the bull mildly sustaining its heavy yoke, is fit symbol of the earth's submissive tolerance. But tigers, leopards, deer, wild swing, fawns and hares-creatures that cannot be inured to the will of man-these the painter chooses for the sake of their skittish gambols and swift, shy evasions, loves them as things that seek the desolation of great plains and wintry snows, as creatures that will not be haltered with a bridle nor tethered by the foot. He would commit to brushwork the gallant splendor of their strido; this he would do *and no more.*"

It is simpler to see here a direct continuity of Taoist tradition than to seek for Indian sources; has not Chuang Tzu spoken in almost the same words (ch. IX) : "Horses have hoofs to carry them over frost and snow; hair to protect them from the wind and cold. They eat grass and drink water and fling up

\* *Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia*, Open Court, March, 1932.



their heels in the meadows. Such is the real nature of horses. Palatial dwellings are of no use to them."....."Thus far only do their natural dispositions carry them."

What now in classical Chinese aesthetic corresponds to the Ch'an-Zen concept of the identity of formal and representative elements in art, to art conceived as pure *act*? We had best undertake this enquiry by proceeding directly to a consideration of the Six Canons of Hsieh Ho, formulated in the fifth century. An attempt has been made to derive these from a list of the Six Limbs of Painting which occurs in an Indian commentary of the thirteenth century. The possibility of derivation is not excluded by the dates, because the Six Limbs are no more than a traditional summary of ideas that were already current in India in the fifth century. But the accidental correspondances are by no means so exact in detail as to suggest derivation, and I regard the Chinese canon as quite independent. On the other hand, the essential correspondances are such as might be expected from a common foundation of aesthetic theory in metaphysical bases.

From this point of view, let us examine the Canons in due order. The first and most important demands the operation or reverberation of the spirit in life movement. The word *ch'i*, spirit, means from the Taoist point of view *life* as it proceeds from Heaven and Earth, the two modalities of the Tao, or even if taken as by Mencius to be the "passion-nature" or "fiery nature", has the same meaning of life-principle, but conceived as the will to life, or desire. It is the same as Hindu *prāṇa*, spiration, identified either directly with Brahman, or manifested as the wind by which the waters are stirred, so that a reflection of God appears in them, which is the world picture. The word *ch'i* is also to be used with literal accuracy as the proper Chinese rendering of the third member of the Christian Trinity. *Ch'i* is accordingly "form" in the sense that "the soul is the form of the body". Those who have studied theology will readily follow these identifications, which I mention here only to demonstrate more clearly the foundation of Chinese aesthetic in traditional metaphysic, and because in a similar way it can be shown that Indian aesthetic theory is purely Vedāntic; and the likeness of Vedānta and Taoism is so immediate that some scholars have supposed a derivation, which, however, does not seem to be required. As to operation or reverberation, these shades of related meaning depend on which of two characters both pronounced *yun* is written. In any case, but preferring the sense "reverberation", the statement is comparable in form with that of the *dhvani* theory of Hindu rhetoricians, who assert that neither the literal nor the allegorical sense of the sound convey its whole import, but that it is only as it were by an echoing of the sound and sense in the heart of the hearer that the suchness (*tattva*), anagogic or transcendental content can be tasted. Just as knowledge is neither subjective nor objective, but has its being only in the *act* of knowing, so art is



neither subjective nor objective, but has its being only in the *act* of aesthetic "imitation". Nor is the *work* of art to be thought of as the art; the art is an act, originally in the artist and remaining in him, but also to be reproduced by the spectator in the act of criticism. As Confucius says: "Are bells and drums all that is meant by music?" In India it is constantly asserted that all art is intellectual, *citta-samjñā*; the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* expresses it thus: "The real picture is not in the colour nor the surface nor the saucer". In many places it is pointed out that though the pictorial surface is flat, we speak of it as being in relief, and the subjectivity even of natural space is asserted when it is pointed out that all we see of natural forms by the eye's intrinsic faculty is a patchwork of colored areas.

The distinction of art from the work of art is also to be found in Whitman, who says: "All music is what awakes in you when you are reminded of it by the instruments, all architecture is what you do to it when you look at it." The work of art then is simply a means of communication: its actual tangible aesthetic surfaces have no other value in themselves than as causes of sensation, pleasant or otherwise, and this is why from the Oriental point of view the modern study of aesthetics by psychological experiment has to be dismissed as altogether futile.

Now as to the nature of the aesthetic act: as we know from what was said about Yoga, it consists in the beginning of a fetch of the singly directed imagination by which the form corresponding to the required notion is drawn into intellectual mental view, and being there held, serves as the *plan* of the work to be done. But before the work can be taken in hand, the artist must have been completely identified with the form evoked in his mind, so only truly knowing it. As in the intellectual mental image thought and its manifestation are thus identified, so in the physical replica, if the artist has been effectively trained and has the habit of his craft, there will be a conformity of actual shape to intended significance. To proceed from the Christian scholastic point of view: as knowledge consists in an *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, so art is a *consonantia diversorum*, viz., of the intelligible idea and its sensible embodiment. Just this coincidence of formal and pictorial, intelligible and sensible elements in a work of art is precisely what is sought in Ch'an-Zen.

Now as to India: We have the terms *sādrśya* and *sāhitya* denoting what is essential respectively in painting and literature. *Sādrśya* is literally conformity, con-similarity, aesthetic "imitation" (*Arts imitatur naturam in sua operatione*) and this refers to a quality wholly self-contained in the work itself, not to a comparison of the work with a model, but rather as we speak of *le mot Juste*. I need hardly remind you that neither in Chinese nor in Indian art do we find



the use of models, or of drawing from nature, except in connection with rough sketches made as an aid to the artist's own knowledge of nature. *Sāhitya* is similarly the coincidence of sound and meaning in verbal art, and this is clearly explained by the example of the two-in-oneness of *Puruṣa* and *Śakti* as joint modalities of Brahman, which you will recognize when translated into Christian terms as the essential identity of the two Persons, Father and son, interior and spoken word, or even better in the generation of the Son from "conjoined principles" in God (St. Thomas, *Summa Theologia*, 1, Q 27, A.2).

Now what in Chinese corresponds to *consonantia*, *sāḍṛṣya*, *sāhitya* ? I have not been able to find a single word used in technical aesthetics with this meaning, but I may say that Hsūan Tsang translates *sāḍṛṣya*, by *ch'ou*, where the word occurs in Vasubandhu to denote a reciprocal relation rather more abstract than is implied by *ch'ou* alone, and that if a phrase were to be coined, *ying ch'ou* might be adequate. But if there is not a single term in use equivalent to *consonantia*, there are numerous dicta embodying the idea : for example, "By means of natural shape (*hsing*) depict the divine (*shen*)." "The great painters of old painted the idea (*i*) and not merely the shape (*hsing*)", and in adverse criticism : "The appearance was like (*hsing-ssu*), but the reverberation (*yūn*) was weak".

This last brings us back to Hsieh Ho. If we take the first and fourth canons together (as we are bound to do, because the canons cannot be mutually contradictory), we have (1) to express the reverberation of the spirit in the movement of life and (2) to make shape (*hsing*) according to natural species (*wu*). To put this in one statement amounts to saying that by means of the representative element express the spiritual conception. Which gives us our *consonantia*. As to *consonantia* in other Chinese writings on art, the fact is that they are always telling about it but do not give it a distinct name.

The second canon asserts that the vehicle of expression (as defined in the first canon) is the brush stroke or line, and it is self-evident that the brush stroke or line is in itself the most abstract and intelligible part of the work, since an outline, boundary, or limiting plane does not correspond to anything seen in Nature, but represents an interpretation of what we see; in other words, line is not representative, but symbolic. The same is implied by Indian authorities when they remind us that it is the line (*rekha*) that interests the master, while the public cares most about colour. The third and fourth canons, taken by themselves, point out that the pictorial or representative elements in a work of art are those of shape (mass or area), and colour, and this, too becomes self-evident if we reflect that what the eye sees in Nature is nothing but a patch-work of colours, as was recognized early in the development of Indian psycho-



logy : coloured areas being thus the primary data of sense impression become in the work of art the primary means of recognition; and because the attempt at recognition is the first, animal reaction of the naive spectator, it has been observed that colour is what interests the public.

The last canon, with the ideogram (*ch'uan*), says "draw according to ancient models." "What he gets by his mind (*shin*) he transmits (*ch'van*) by his hand". This is not merely a special case of the conservation which we have already shown to be proper to traditional cultures such as the Chinese and Indian, but can be paralleled by an abundance of Indian words all used in speaking of the practice of art, for example *Śāstramāna*, *āgamārthāvisaṁvādī*, *nāyāt*, *vidhivat*, *silpānurūpa*, etc., all meaning "According to canonical prescription", "ascertained rules", "craft traditions", etc.

Let us now turn to the San P'ing, a well known Chinese classification of painting according to intrinsic virtue. The threefold division is as divine (*shen*), profound (*miao*), and accomplished (*neng*), the first representing absolute perfection, the goal rather than the attainable in human art, the second is such true mastery as approaches perfection, the third is mere dexterity. A striking parallel to this occurs in the discussion of the poetic imagination by Indian rhetoricians, especially in the second chapter of Rāja Śekhara's *Kāvya-Mimāṃsa*. Here the creative faculty, *kārayitrī pratibhā*, is considered as of three kinds: spontaneous (*sahaja*), or *sārasvata* (from *Sarasvatī*, goddess of music); acquired (*āhārya*) or acquired by constant exercise (*abhyāsika*); and the product of instruction (*āupadeśikā*). The first of these does not mean (nor does Chinese *shen*) divinely *inspired*, but rather denotes a degree of facility divine in kind, a "perfection" or "grace". Indeed, the perfected being, for example the Buddha or Bodhisattva, is said precisely to possess a perfect virtuosity (*kausāla*) in creative (*nairmāṇika*) and executive (*śailpasthānika*) power, and likewise to be possessed of an absolute *pramāṇa*, of which we have seen that the aesthetic conscience is a special mode. One is reminded of the angels, who are said to have fewer ideas and to use less means than men. The Chinese also have an independent class, the Extraordinary (*ī* taken with reference to the Tao) applied to a more personal kind of philosophical or literary painting, great in achievement, though not the work of professional artists, nor governed by traditional rules, *ch'uan*. This comes nearer to the modern conception of genius than does any qualifying term already mentioned. The Indian conception of the poetic imagination as power (*śakti*) offers a partial equivalent. But none of these latter terms can be forced to imply that there can be made any real comparison of the Oriental "perfect artist" with the occidental "genius". In the Orient, perfection may be obtainable



from an unorthodox position, but if such a thing can happen, it is really as an abnormality and accident; in any case, perfection could never be thought of as achieved *because* of a neglect of or emancipation from rule, but only *in spite of* such a taking of liberties. It is very possible Chinese *ī* applied to painting ought to be rendered "flair" rather than "genius". Much more work needs to be done in translating Chinese writings about art and works of art.

Chinese and Indian technique in various arts, though not in all, can be profitably compared. For example, as to painting, the essential medium in both is that of the brush outline, colour being secondary. The second canon of Hsieh Ho alludes to the rendering of structure by the brush, and Indian writers are never tired of asserting that master painters and competent critics are interested in the *purity of the line*, while what the *public* likes is richness of colour. Other parallels can be drawn between Chinese and Indian perspective, defined simply as "means of suggesting the third dimension"; some work in this field has already been done. Indian and Chinese music, and still more dramatic technique, present many remarkable parallels; here the essential and accidental have to be disentangled.

Finally, I want to call your attention to the significance of certain Chinese fairy tales, as they would generally be called, though they are really myths. Everyone will have heard of the Taoist legends of the disappearance of a supreme artist, or of the coming to life and disappearance of his work: I allude particularly to the legends of Wu Tao Tzu, and that of the 'Flight of the Dragon', first preserved to us from the Liang Dynasty; the latter has provided the title of a charming booklet written by Binyon on Far Eastern Art. The notion of the disappearance, or rather transformation, of the perfected being is in itself necessarily common to all metaphysical traditions; it occurs, for example, in Christianity as Ascension (it is interpreted by the schoolmen that the material part of the body is disintegrated in the air, only the being of the body returning to God), and in the Vedanta Transformation (*abhisambhava*), thus *śarīramakṛtamākṛtam kṛtat:nā brahma-lokam abhisambhavyāmi*, "Having unmade the body as a self made perfect, I am transformed to the unmade [uncreated] world of Brahman", *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII, 13. The disappearance of the poet-saint *Mānikka Vācagar* in the Indian, of Moses, Enoch, and Elias in the Hebrew, and of the latter as al-Khizr (who is said to have partaken of the Water of Life) in the Islamic tradition, are cases in point. Need I say that transformation has nothing in common with death or immortality, except as to the accident of disappearance?

As to the rationale of this : modes of *Being* can only be thought of, in the first place, as manifested or non-manifested. *Manifested* being, in the



second place, as consciousness functioning respectively on the intelligible and sensible planes, as in Aristotle and scholastic systems in general. Now, on the sensible or material plane, here and now, we have to recognize both a mental creation (the formation of the art in the artist), and the imitation of this creation by an act of will in a material work of art. Such work of art "live" only metaphorically. But an art of this kind, with its inevitable imperfections due to what Dante calls the *sorda*, Hindu *tāmasika*, qualities of the already existing materials employed in "making", is *a priori* excluded from the intelligible world, which is complete in itself, though invisible to the eye's intrinsic faculty. There can only be conceived the mental creation, the art in the artist, with immediate identity of cause and effect. This is *creation* in the religious sense; in the language of metaphysics, *manifestation*. The whole idea is very clearly expressed by Eckhart when he says: "a carpenter building a house will first erect it in his mind, and were the house enough subject to his will, then materials apart, the only difference between them would be that of begetter and suddenly begotten.....as it is in God.....there being no distinction of outpouring and outpoured".

So then the perfected man, in his aspect as artist, or in any aspect, who attains partial realization (and therewith the intelligible world) or *a fortiori* who attains to complete realization (and therewith the non-manifested world, which is not merely invisible but super-rational or alogical) must be thought of as transformed and invisible from our point of view, there remaining nothing by which his existence can be sensibly registered. At the same time, his art can now only be described as a mental creation or manifestation, existing only and immediately as natural species, the phenomenal world, the unknowable as we know it. The perfected artist then shares in God's eternal and timeless creation, seeing the universe, not as we see it, but as the world picture, the totality of forms reflected in a single image, Chuang Tzu's "mirror of the Universe"—"painted by the Self on the canvas of the Self", as Śaṅkara says. "When painting has reached divinity (*shen*) there is an end of the matter."

Now, while these ideas are expressed more or less explicitly in every tradition, or rather in *the* tradition wherever it can be recognized—even the Greek story of Pygmalion represents a distant echo—it is so far as I know peculiar to China to have invented so many specific legends of the disappearance of the perfected artist and the coming to life of his "work".

I must now conclude, and would like to repeat that my real theses have been (1) the distinction of what is essential from what is accidental in Chinese-



Indian parallels, and (2) to point out that however much your mentality may be opposed to the method of induction from First Principles, there is no other method by which oriental civilizations, which are founded in First Principles, can be made intelligible. The method of deduction from observed fact, to which no doubt you are irrevocably attached, leads only to description and classification, which may be "accurate", but need not imply any comprehension of or assimilation to the thing described and classified. Description and classification are acts of the mind; comprehension an act of the pure intellect.

So then the perfected man in his aspect as artist, or in any respect, who attains partial realization (and therewith the intelligible world) or a farther who attains to complete realization (and therewith the non-manifested world, which is not merely intelligible but also rational or logical) must be thought of as transformed and involved from our point of view, there remaining nothing by which his existence can be sensibly registered. At the same time, his art can now only be described as a natural species, the phenomenal world, the existing only and immediately as natural species, the phenomenal world, the knowable as we know it. The perfected artist then shares in God's eternal and timeless creation, seeing the universe, not as we see it, but as the world picture, the totality of forms reflected in a kind of image, Chuang Tzu's "mirror of the universe"—painted by the Self on the canvas of the Self, as Sankara says: "When painting has reached divinity (then) there is an end of the matter."

Now while these ideas are expressed more or less explicitly in every tradition, whether in the fashion wherever it can be recognized—even the Greek story of Pygmalion represents a distant echo—it is so far as I know, peculiar to China to have invented so many specific legends of the descent of the perfected artist and the coming to life of his work.





# The Intellectual Operation In Indian Art\*

The **Sukranīṭisāra**, IV, 70-71 (translated in my "Transformation of Nature in Art", p. 113) defines the initial procedure of the Indian imager : he is to be expert in contemplative vision (**yoga-dhyāna**), for which the canonical prescriptions provide the basis, and only in this way, and not by direct observation, are the required results to be attained. The whole procedure may be summed up in the words "when the visualisation has been realised, set to work" (**dhyātvā kuryyāt**, ib VII, 74), or "When the model has been conceived, set down on the wall what was visualised" (**cintayet pramāṇam; tad-dhyātām bhittau niveśayet**, **Abhilaṣitārthacintāmaṇi**, 1, 3, 158)<sup>1</sup>. These two stages in procedure are the same as the 'actus primus' and 'actus secundus', the "free" and "servile" parts of the artist's operation, in terms of Scholastic aesthetic. I have shown elsewhere ("Technique and Theory of Indian Painting", Technical Studies, III, pp. 59-89) that the same procedure is taken for granted as well in secular as in hieratic art. It is, however, in connection with the hieratic prescriptions (**sādhana**, **dhyāna mantra**) that the most detailed expositions of the primary act are to be found; and these are of such interest and significance that it seems desirable to publish a complete and careful rendering of one of the longest available examples of such a text, annotated by citations from others<sup>2</sup>. We proceed accordingly with the **Kimcit-Vistara-Tārā Sādhana**<sup>3</sup>, No. 98 in the **Sādhanamālā**, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. XXVI, pp. 200-206.

## Kimcit-Vistara-Tārā Sādhana

Having first of all washed his hands and feet, etc.; and being purified, the officiant (**mantri**) is to be comfortably seated in a solitary place that is strewn with fragrant flowers, pervaded by pleasant scents, and agreeable to himself. Conceiving in his own heart (**svahrdaye...viçintya**) the moon's orb

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as developed from the primal sound (**prathama-svarapariṇatam**, i. e. "evolved from the letter A")<sup>4</sup>, let him visualise (**paśyet**) therein a beautiful blue lotus, within its filaments the moon's unspotted orb, and thereon the yellow-seed syllable **Tām**. Then, with the sheafs of lustrous rays, that proceed (**niḥsṛtya**) from that yellow seed-syllable **Tām**, rays that dispel the world's dark mystery throughout its ten directions and that find out the indefinite limits of the extension of the universe; making all these to shine downwards (**tān sarvān avabhāśya**); and leading forth (**āniya**) the countless and measureless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas whose abode is there; these (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas) are established (**avasthāpyante**) on the background of space (**ākāśadeśe**).

After performing a great office (**mahatīm pūjām kṛtvā**) unto all these vast compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas established on the background of space, by means of celestial flowers, incense, scent, garlands, unguents, powders, ascetic garb, umbrellas, bells, banner, and so forth, he should make a confession of sin, as follows : "Whatever sinful act I may have done in the course of my wandering in his beginningless vortex, whether of body or mind, or have caused to be committed or have consented to, all these I confess."

And having thus confessed<sup>5</sup>, and also made admission of the fault that consists in things that have been left undone, he should make an Endorsement of Merit, as follows : "I endorse the proficiency (**kuśalam**) of the Sugatas, Pratyekas, **Srāvakas**, and Jinas, and their sons the Bodhisattvas, and that of the spheres of the Angels and of **Brahmā**, in its entirety". Then comes the Taking of Refuge in the Three Jewels : "I take refuge in the Buddha, for so long as the Bodhi-circle endures; I take refuge in the Norm, for so long as the Bodhi-circle endures. I take refuge in the Congregation, for so long as the Bodhi-circle endures". Then comes the act of Adhesion to the way : "It is for me to adhere to the way that was revealed by the **Tathāgatas**, and to none other". Then the Prayer : "May the blessed **Tathāgatas** and their children (the Bodhisattvas), who have accomplished the world's purpose since its first beginning, stand by and effect my total despiration (**mām parinirvāntu**). Then the petition : "May the blessed **Tathāgatas** indoctrinate me with incomparable expositions of the Norm, of such sort that beings in the world-vortex may be liberated from the bondage of becoming (**bhava-bandhanāt nirmuktāḥ**) full soon". Then he should make an everlasting Assignment of Merit : (**puṇya-pariṇāma**) : "Whatever root of proficiency (**kuśalam**) has arisen by performance of the seven extraordinary offices (**pūjāḥ**) and by confession of sin, all that I devote to the attainment of Total Awakening (**samyak-sambodhaye**). Or he recites the verses pertinent to the seven extraordinary offices : All sins I confess and gladly consent to the good deeds of others. I take refuge in the Blessed one, and in the Three



Jewels of the True Norm, to the end that I may not linger in the state of birth. I adhere to that way and designate the Holy Discipline (**subha-vidhīn**) to the attainment of full Awakening". As soon as he has celebrated (**vidhāya**) the seven-fold extraordinary office, he should pronounce the formula of dismissal (**visarjayet**): "**Om, Āḥ, Muḥ**".

Thereupon he should realise (**bhāvayet**) the Four-fold Brahma-rapture (**caturbrahma-vihāram**) of Love, Compassion, Cheerfulness, and Equanimity (**maitrī, karuṇā, muditā, upekṣā**) by stages (**kramaṇa**) as follows: "What is Love? Its character is that of the fondness for an only son that is natural to all beings; or its similitude is that of sympathy in the welfare and happiness (of others). And what is Compassion? It is the desire to save from the Triple Ill (**tridukhāt**) and the causes of Ill; or this is Compassion, to say 'I shall remove from the pain of the Triple Ill those born beings whose abode is in the iron dwelling of the world-vortex that is aglow in the great fire of the Triple Ill'; or it is the wish to lift up from the ocean of the world-vortex the beings that are suffering there from the pain of the Triple Ill. Cheerfulness is of this kind: Cheerfulness is a sense of perfect happiness; or Cheerfulness is the confident hope of bringing it to pass that every being in the world-vortex shall attain to the yet unforeseen Buddhahood; or it is the mental attraction felt by all these beings towards the enjoyment and possession of these virtuosities. What is Equanimity? Equanimity is the accomplishment of a great good for all born beings, whether they be good or evil, by the removal of whatever obstacles stand in the way of their kindly behaviour; or Equanimity is a spontaneous affection for all other beings without respect of any personal interest in the friendly conduct; or Equanimity is an indifference to the eight mundane categories of gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame or praise, pleasure and pain, and so forth, and to all works of supererogation."

Having realised the Four-fold Brahma-rapture, he should realise (**bhāvayet**) the fundamentally Immaterial Nature of all Principles (**sarva-dharma-prakṛti-pariśuddhatām**). For all the principles are fundamentally immaterial by nature, and he too should manifest (**āmukhīkuryyāt**): "I am fundamentally immaterial, etc....." This fundamental Immateriality of all Principles is to be established by the incantation "**Om**, the principles are all immaterial by nature, I am by nature immaterial". If now all the principles are naturally immaterial, what can have brought forth the world-vortex (**saṁsāram**)? It arises in the covering up (of the immateriality of the principles) by the dust of the notions of subject and object, and so forth. How this may be removed is by realisation of the True Way: thereby it is destroyed. So the fundamental Immateriality of all Principles is perfected.



When the realisation of the fundamental Immateriality of all Principles has been effected, he should develop (vibhāvayet) the Emptiness of all Principles (sarva-dharma-sūnyatām). Emptiness is like this : Let one conceive "Whatever is in motion or at rest (i. e. the whole phenomenal world) is essentially nothing but the manifested order of what is without duality when the mind is stripped of all conceptual extensions such as the notion of subject and object. He should establish this very Emptiness by the incantation : "Om, I am essentially, in my nature of adamant intelligence, the Emptiness".

Then he should realise the Blessed Āryatārā, as proceeding from the yellow seed-syllable Tām, upon the spotless orb of the moon that is in the filaments of the full blown lotus within the lunar orb originally established in the heart. He should conceive (cintayet) her to be of deep black colour, two armed, with a smiling face, proficient in every virtue, without defect of any kind whatever, adorned with ornaments of heavenly gems, pearls, and jewels, her twin breasts decorated with lovely garlands in hundred-fold series, her two arms decked with heavenly bracelets and bangles, her loins beautified with glittering series of girdles of flawless gems, her two ankles beautified by golden anklets set with divers gems, her hair entwined with fragrant wreaths of Pārijāta and such like flowers, her head with a resplendent jewelled full-reclining figure of the Blessed Tathāgata Amoghasiddhi, a radiant and most seductive similitude, extremely youthful, with eyes of the blue of the autumn lotus, her body robed in heavenly garments, seated in Arddhaparyanka pose, within a circle of white rays on a white lotus large as any cart-wheel, her right hand in the sign of generosity, and holding in her left a full blown blue lotus. Let him develop (vibhāvayet) this likeness of our Blessed Lady as long as he desires.

Thereupon our Blessed Lady is led forth out of space (ākāśāt ānīyate) in her intelligible aspect (jñāna-sattva-rūpa), by means of the countless sheafs of rays, illumining the Three Worlds, that proceed from the yellow seed-syllable Tām within the filaments of the lotus in the moon of which the orb was established in the heart, and from that Blessed Lady (as above described). Leading her forth (ānīya), and establishing her on the background of space (ākāśadeśe api avasthāpya), he is to make an offering at that Blessed Lady's feet, with scented water and fragrant flowers in a jewelled vessel, welcoming her with heavenly flowers, incense, scents, garlands, unguents, powders, cloths, umbrella, bells, banner and so forth, and should worship (pūjayet) her in all manner of wise. Repeating his worship again and again, and with lauds, he should display the finger-sign (mudrām darśayet)....of a full-blown



lotus. After he has gratified our Blessed Lady's intelligible aspect with this finger-sign, he is to realise (**bhāvayet**) the incantation of our Blessed Lady in her contingent aspect (**samaya-sattva-rūpavā**) and is to liberate (**adhi-muñcet**) the non-duality of these (two aspects). Thereupon the rays proceeding from the seed-syllable **Tām** that is upon the spotless orb of the moon within the filaments of the blue lotus in the lunar orb....rays that illumine the ten quarters of the Three Worlds, that are of unlimited range, and proper to Lady **Tārā**.. remove the poverty and other ills of being existent therein, by means of a rain of jewels, and content them with the nectar of the doctrine of the Immediate Non-essentiality, and so forth (**kṣaṇika-nairātmādi**)<sup>7</sup>, of the Principles.

When he has thus accomplished the divers need of the world, and has evolved the cosmic aspect of **Tārā** (**viśvam api tārārūpaṁ niṣpādyā**), he should realise again (**punaḥ . bhāvayet**) for so long as fatigue does not prevail (**yāvat khedo na jāyate tāvat**)<sup>8</sup> whatever has come to be in the yellow seed-syllable **Tām**, in the stages of expansion and contraction (**spuraṇa-samharaṇa-kramaṇa**)<sup>9</sup>. If he breaks away from this realisation (**bhāvanātaḥ khinno**)<sup>10</sup> he should mutter an incantation (**mantraṁ jayet**), in which case the incantation is : **Om tāre tuttāre ture svahā**. This is the king of incantations, of mighty power ; it is honoured, worshipped, and endorsed, by all the **Tathāgatas**.

Breaking off the contemplation (**dhyānāt vyutthito**) and when he has seen the mundane aspect of **Tārā** (**jagat-tārā-rūpaṁ-dṛṣtvā**)<sup>11</sup> he should experience at will the consciousness of his own identity with the Blessed Lady (**bhagavaty ahaṁkāreṇa yatheṣṭaṁ viharet**)<sup>12</sup>. The longed for Great Proficiencies fall at the practitioner's feet (**bhāvayataḥ . . . . caranyoḥ**) ; what can I say of the other Proficiencies ? These come of themselves. Whoever realises (**bhāvayet**) our Blessed Lady in a solitary mountain cave, he indeed sees her face to face (**pratyakṣata eva tām paśyati**)<sup>13</sup> : the Blessed Lady herself bestows upon him his very respiration and all else. What more can be said ? She puts the very Buddhahood, so hard to win, in the very palm of his hand. Such is the whole **Sādhana** of the **Kimcit-vistara-Tārā**.

The **Sādhana** translated above, differs only from others in the **Sādhana-mālā** in its more than average length and detail. The whole process is primarily one of worship, and need not necessarily be followed by embodiment of the visualised likeness in physical material ; but where the making of an actual image is intended, it is the inevitable preliminary. Even if the artist actually works from a sketch or under verbal instruction, as sometimes happens, this



only means that the 'actus primus' and 'actus secundus' are divided between two persons ; the fundamental nature of the representation, in all the details of its composition and colouring and as regards the strictly ideal character of its integration are in any case determined by and can only be understood in the light of the mental operation. the 'actus primus' by which the given theme is made to assume a definite form in the mind of the artist. or was originally made to take shape in the mind of some artist ; this form being that of the theme itself, and not the likeness of anything seen or known objectively. In other words, what the **Sādhana** supplies is the detailed sequence according to which the formal cause or pattern of the work to be done is developed from its germ, from the mere hint of what is required ; this hint itself corresponding to the requirement of the patron, which is the final cause, while the efficient and material cause are brought into play only if and when the artist proceeds to servile operation, the act of "imitation", "similitude being with respect to the form."

Before we relinguish the present consideration of the 'actus primus' in Oriental art, reference must be made to another way in which the derivation of the formal image is commonly accounted for. It is assumed that upon an intellectual or angelic level of reference the forms of things are intellectually emanated and have an immediate existence of their own. When this is mythologically formulated, such a level of reference becomes a heaven above. Then the artist, commissioned here, is thought of as seeking his model there. When, for example (**Mahāvamsa** Ch. XXVI) a palace is to be built, the architect is said to make his way to heaven ; and making a sketch of what he sees there, he returns to earth and carries out this design in the materials at his disposal. So "It is in imitation of the angelic works of art that any work of art is accomplished here" (Aitareya **Brāhmaṇa**, VI, 27). This is a mythological formula obviously equivalent in significance to the more psychological account in the **Sādhana**s. And here also it is easy to find extra-Indian parallels ; for example, Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 9, II where he says that all music is "an earthly representation of the music that there is in the rhythm of the ideal world", and "The crafts such as building and carpentry which give us matter in wrought forms, may be said, in that they draw on pattern, to take their principles from that realm and from the thinking there." And this indeed it is that accounts for the essential characteristic of the wrought forms ; if the Zohar tells us of the Tabernacle that "all its individual parts were formed in the pattern of that above", this tallies with Tertullian who says of the cherubim and seraphim figured in the exemplum of the Ark, that because they are not in the likeness of anything on earth, they do not offend against the interdiction of idolatry : "they are not found in that form of similitude in reference to which the prohibition was given" (*Contra Marcionem*, II, 22).



The emphasis that is laid upon the strict self-identification of the artist with the imagined form should be especially noted. Otherwise stated, this means that he does not understand what he wants to express by means of any idea external to himself. Nor indeed can anything be rightly expressed which does not proceed from within, moved by its form. Alike from the Indian and Scholastic point of view, understanding depends upon an assimilation of knower and known ; this is indeed the divine manner of understanding, in which the knower is the known. Per contra, the distinction of subject from object is the primary condition of ignorance, or imperfect knowledge, for nothing is known essentially except as it exists in consciousness, everything else is supposition. Hence the Scholastic and Indian definitions of perfect understanding as involving 'adaequatio rei et intellectus', or '*tad-ākaraṭā*' ; cf Gilson, *Philosophie de Saint Bonaventura*, p. 146, "Toute connaissance est, en effect, au sens fort du terme, une assimilation. L'act par lequel une intelligence s'empare d'un objet pour en **apprecier** la nature suppose que cette intelligence se rend semblable a cet objet, **qu'elle en revet momentanément la forme, et c'est parce qu'elle** peut en quelque sort tout devenir qu'elle peut **egalement tout connaître**".<sup>14</sup> It follows that the artist must really have been whatever he is to represent. Dante sums up the whole matter from the mediæval point of view when he says "He who would paint a figure, if he can not be it cannot paint it" (*Convivio*, Canzone III, 53-54) or as he otherwise expresses it "No painter can portray any figure, if he have not first of all made himself such as the figure ought to be" (ib. IV, 10, 106, p. 309 of the Oxford text). Given the value that we nowadays attach to observation and experiment as being the only valid grounds of knowledge it is difficult for us to take these words as literally and simply as they are intended. Yet there is nothing rhetorical in them ; nor is the point of view an exceptional, one<sup>15</sup>. It is rather our own empiricism that is, humanly speaking, exceptional and that may be at fault. Ching Hao, for example in the tenth century, is expressing the same point of view when he says of the "Subtle" painter (the highest type of the human artist) that he "first experiences in imagination the instincts and passions of all things that exist in heaven and earth ; then, in a manner appropriate to the subject, the natural forms flow spontaneously from his hand". The closest parallels to our Indian texts occur, however, in Plotinus : "Every mental act is accompanied by an image....fixed and like a picture of the thought...the Reason-Principle...the revealer the bridge between the concept and the image-taking faculty...exhibits the concept as in a mirror" (*Enneads*, IV, 3, 30), and "In contemplative vision, especially when it is vivid, we are not at the time aware of our own personality ; we are in possession of ourselves, but the activity is towards the object of vision with which the thinker becomes identified ; he has made himself over



as matter to be shaped ; he takes ideal form under the action of the vision, while remaining potentially himself"<sup>16</sup> (ib. IV, 4, 2).

When we reflect that mediaeval aesthetic, that is to say the preoccupations with which the patron and artist alike approached the activity of making things, stems from Neo-platonism through Augustine, Dionysius, and Erigena to Eckhart, it will not surprise us that mediaeval Christian art should have been so much like Indian in kind ; it is only after the thirteenth century that Christian art, though it deals nominally with the same themes, is altogether changed in essence, its properly symbolic language and ideal reference being now obscured by statements of observed fact and the intrusion of the artist's personality. On the other hand, in the art that we are considering, the theme is all in all, the artist merely the means to an end ; the patron and the artist have a common interest, but it is not in one another. Here, in the words of the **Lankāvatāra Sūtra**, the picture is not in the colours, neither has it any concrete existence elsewhere. The picture is like a dream, the aesthetic surfaces merely its vehicle, and anyone who regarded these aesthetic surfaces themselves as constituting the art would have been thought of as an idolater and sybarite. Our modern attitude to art is actually fetishistic ; we prefer the symbol to the reality ; for us the picture is in the colours, the colours are the picture. To say that the work of art is its own meaning is the same as to say that it has no meaning, and in fact there are many modern aestheticians who assert explicitly that art is unintelligible.<sup>17</sup>

We have thus before us two diametrically opposed conceptions of the function of the work of art ; one of the work of art as a thing provided by the artist to serve as the occasion of a pleasurable sensory experience, the other of the work of art as providing the support for an intellectual operation to be performed by the spectator. The former point of view may suffice to explain the origin of the modern work and for its appreciation, but it neither explains nor enables us to make any but a decorative use of the mediaeval or Oriental works, which are not merely surfaces, but have intelligible references. We may elect for our own purposes to adhere to the contemporary point of view and the modern kind of art, and may decide to acquire examples of the other kind in the same way that a magpie collects materials with which to adorn its nest. At the same time in fact however we also pretend to study and aspire to understand the works of this other kind that are assembled in our homes and museums. And this we cannot do without taking into account their final and formal causes ; how can we judge of anything without first knowing what purpose it was intended to serve, and what was its maker's intention ? It is for example only the logic of their iconography that can explain the composition of the Oriental works, only the manner in which the model is conceived



that can explain the representation that is not in any sense optically plausible or made as if to function biologically.

We must in fact begin by approaching these works as if they were not works of art in our sense, and for this purpose it will be a good plan to begin our study without regard to the quality of the works selected for study, even perhaps deliberately choosing poor or provincial examples, wishing to know what kind of art this is before we proceed to eliminate what is not good of its kind ; for it is only when we know what is being said that we shall be in a position to know whether it has been well said, or perhaps so poorly expressed as not really to have been said at all.

It is not altogether without reason that Professor Jung has drawn a parallel between the "artistic" productions of his pathological patients and the **Maṇḍalas** of eastern art.<sup>18</sup> He asks his patients "actually to paint what they have seen in dream or fantasy..... To paint what we see before us is a different matter from painting what we see within." Although these productions are sometimes "beautiful" (see the examples reproduced in 'The Secret of the Golden Flower' Pls. 1-10) Jung treats them as "wholly worthless according to the tests of serious art. It is even essential that no such value be allowed them for otherwise my patients might imagine themselves to be artists, and this would spoil the good effects of the exercise. It is not a question of art.....or rather it should not be a question of art but of something more, something other than mere art : namely the living effect upon the patient himself...some kind of centring process....a process which brings into being a new centre or equilibrium." This corresponds to the Indian conception of the work of art as a "means of reintegration" (**samskaraṇa**, **Aitareya Brāhmaṇa**, VI, 27, **Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa**, VI, 1, 2, 29, etc.). It is true of course, as Jung freely admits, that none of the "European **Maṇḍalas**"..."achieve the conventionally and traditionally established harmony and completeness of the Eastern **Maṇḍala**." The Eastern diagrams are in fact finished products of a sophisticated culture ; they are created, not by the disintegrated patient as in Jung's cases, but rather by the psychological specialist himself for his own use or that of others whose state of mental discipline is already above rather than below the average level. We have here to do with an art that has "fixed ends in view and ascertained means of operation". In what is thus a professional and conscious product we naturally find the qualities of beauty highly developed, viz. those of unity, order and clarity ; we can if we insist upon doing so, regard these products as works of decorative art, and use them accordingly. But if we limit our response in this way, not taking any account of the manner and purpose of their production, we cannot claim to be understanding them ; they are not explicable in



terms of technique and material, it is much rather the art in the artist which determines the development of the technique and the choice of material, and in any case it is the meaning and logical relations of the parts that determines their arrangement, or what we call composition. After the form has once been conceived, the artist performing the servile operation cannot alter it to better please his taste or ours, and never had any intention to do so. It is therefore that we maintain that no approach to Oriental art that does not take full account of all its purposes, and of the specific processes by which these purposes were achieved, can pretend to adequacy. This will apply as much in the case of the minor arts as in that of the major arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture. The Oriental art cannot be isolated from life and studied 'in vacuo'; we can only be said to have understood it when we have, at least for the time being, so far identified ourselves with its premises as to fully consent to it, taking its kind for granted in just the same way that we take a modern fashion for granted; until we do this, the forms of Oriental art will always seem to us arbitrary or at the least exotic or curious, and this will be the measure of our misunderstanding, for it was none of these things in the eyes of those for whom it was made and who knew how to use it. The man who still worships the Buddhist image in its shrine has in many respects a better understanding of Buddhist art than the man who looks at the same image in a museum, as an object of "fine art".





## REFERENCES

1. Cf. also *Aṭṭhasālinī*, para 203, PTS. ed. p. 64. "A mental concept (*citta-saññā*) arises in the mind of the painter, 'such and such forms should be made in such and such ways'.... Conceiving (*cintetvā*) 'Above this form, let this be : below, this ; on either side, this', thus it is that by mental operation (*cintitena kameṇa*) the other painted forms come into being".
  2. Professor, G. Tucci has recently discussed the Buddhist methods of visualisation, using Tibetan sources, in *Indo-Tibetica, III, I Templi del Tibet Occidentale e il Loro Simbolismo Artistico*, Rome, 1935 (see especially 25; *Metodi e significato dell' evocazione tantrica*, p. 97).
  3. This *Sādhana* has also been translated, with certain abbreviations, by Bhattacharya, in his *Buddhist Iconography*, p. 169 f.
  4. For a beginning in this way, cf. *Sādhana No. 280 (Yamāntaka)*, where the operator (*bhāvakaḥ*) having first performed his ablutions, 'realises in his own heart the syllable *Yam* in black, within a moon originating from the letter A' (*a-kāraja-candre kṛṣṇa-yam-kāraṁ vibhāvya*).
- The seed-syllable is always the nasalised initial syllable of the name of the divinity to be represented. For a general idea of the manner in which the initial visualisation is conceived see my "Elements of Buddhist Iconography", 1935, Pl. XIII, fig. 40. See also the reproductions in *Avalon, The Serpent Power*. The manner in which the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are thought of as brought forth from emanated rays is often illustrated, e. g. Bhattacharya, *Buddhist Iconography*, fig. 52.
- It will be remarked that the whole process, in which the movement of a sound precedes that of any form, repeats the traditional concept of creation by an uttered Word ; cf. *St Thomas, Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 45, a. 6, referring to the procedure of the artist as 'per verbum in intellectu conceptum'.
5. It may appear to the reader at first sight that the religious exercises that are described have little connection with art. They are of real significance in this connection, however, precisely because (1) the immaterial office of personal devotions is actually the same as the imaginative procedure of the artist, with only this distinction that the latter subsequently proceeds to manufacture, and (2) the nature of the exercises themselves reveals the state of mind in which the formation of images takes place.
  6. *Maitrī* i. e. *caritas*, rather than *amor*.





7. Bhattacharya misrenders **kṣaṇika** by "temporary" ; the Non-essentiality is not momentary in the temporal sense, but rather the true now or momentaneity of eternity. The Buddha's Omniscience is called "momentary" in the same sense.
8. In the **Divyāvadāna**, Cowell and Neill ed., p. 547, it is **kheda**, "weariness" or "lassitude" that prevents **Rudrāyaṇa's** painters from grasping the Buddha's similitude; and this **kheda** is of the same nature as the "infirmity of contemplation" (**śithila samādhi**) that accounts for the portrait painter's failure in **Mālavikāgnimitra**, II, 2. The remedy is provided in **Sādhana** No. 280, "If he is wearied' he should mutter an incantation" (**khede tu mantram japet**).
9. In **Sādhana** No. 44, **sphuraṇa-saṃharaṇa-nyayena**. These expressions do mean as I once thought "eliminating all fluctuation", but rather imply a repeated operation, with alternate development and involution of the forms in accordance with their visual ontology, Cf. **Śilparatna**, XLVI, 39, **smṛtvā smṛtvā punaḥ punaḥ**, "repeatedly recalling". All these instructions imply that the image is to be made as definite as possible, it must be firmly adhered to, never allowed to slip or waver.
10. In **Sādhana** No. 88, **dhyānāt khinno mantram japet**; with the same meaning; **dhyāna** and **bhāvana** being interchangeable terms.
11. Whether the **samaya-sattva**, **viśva**, and **jagat** aspects are to be regarded as the same or as successively developed modes of the likeness of **Tārā** is not perfectly clear.
12. A self-identification with the forms evoked may be assumed throughout. In many cases we find **ātmanam**, "himself", in explicit connection with the injunctive **bhāvayet** or participle **vicintya**. For example, **ātmanam simhanāda, lokeśvara-rūpaṃ bhāvayet**, "He is to realise himself in the likeness of **Simhanāda Lokeśvara**," **ātmanam mahākālāṃ bhāvayet**, "He is to realise himself as **Mahākālā**", **trailokyavijaya bhātṭarakam** .. **ātmanam vicintya**, "conceiving himself to be **Trailokyavijaya Bhātṭaraka**" (Bhattacharya, *Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 36, 121, 146); **ātmanam ciraṃ bhāvayet**, "He is to realise himself for a long time" (in the intelligible aspect of **Yamāntaka**), **Sādhana** No. 280, and **jambhalam bhāvayet**, **jambhala eva bhavati**, "He is to realise **Jambhala**, and indeed becomes **Jambhala**", *ib.* No. 291. **Bhāvayet** is a causative form of **bhu** "to become", **ātmanam bhavayet** meaning literally "let him make himself become". The **Sādhanas** constantly employ the roots **cit**, to think, **be**



known, etc., and dhyai, to contemplate, visualise, in the same sense as the causative of *bhu*. *Bhavati*, "becomes", is commonly used already in the *R̥g Veda* with reference to the assumption of particular forms corresponding to specific functions, e. g. V, 3, 1, "Thou, Agni, becomest (Bhavasi) *Mitra* when kindled".

*Bhagavatī ahamkāreṇa* in the present text is literally "by making the Ego to the Blessed Lady", or "by having the Blessed Lady for his Ego-concept". In a *Sādhana* excerpted by Foucher, *L'Iconographie, Bouddhique* II, p. 10, Note 2, we find tato *dr̥dhāhamkāraṁ kuryāt : yā bhagavatī prajñāpāramitā so' ham; yo' ham sā bhagavatī prajñāpāramitā* "Then let him make a strict self-identification, as follows : 'I am the Blessed Lady *Prajñāpāramitā*; what I am, that Blessed Lady *Prajñāpāramitā* is'".

13. In *Sādhana* N. 44, *pratyakṣam ābhāti*, "appears before his eyes", or "appears objectively". This objective manifestation becomes the artist's model, in case the operator proceeds from the act of worship to that of execution in material form. The manner in which such a manifestation appears objectively can be seen in my *Rājput Painting*, Pl. VII. If the operator has been successful, this manifested form will occupy the whole field of vision and attention, to the exclusion of all else.
14. It would be preferable to say "c'est parce qu'elle est tout qu'elle peut également tout connaître", in accordance with the view that man is the exemplar and effectively the demiurge of all things; meaning, of course, by "man", that "human nature which has nothing to do with time", for this is anything but an individually solipsist point of view. It is not that the knower and known are mutually modified by the fact of observation, but that there is nothing knowable apart from the act of knowledge.
15. A remarkable approximation to this point of view may be cited from Sir James Jeans' Presidential Address to the British Association, 1934 : Nature is not the object of the subject-object relation, but the relation itself. There is, in fact, no clear-cut division between the subject and the object; they form an indivisible whole which now becomes nature. This thesis finds its final expression in the wave-parable, which tells us that nature consists of waves and that these are of the general quality of waves of knowledge or of absence of knowledge, in our own minds...if ever we are to know the true nature of waves, these waves must consist of something we already have in our own minds...the external world is essentially of the same nature as mental ideas". These remarks are tantamount to an



exposition of the Vedāntic and Buddhist theory of the conceptuality of all phenomena, where nature and art alike are regarded as projections of mental concepts (*citta-saṃjñā*) and as belonging to a strictly mental order of experience (*citta-mātrā*) without substantial existence apart from the act (*vr̥tti*) of consciousness: cf. my "An Early Passage on Indian Painting", in *Eastern Art*, III, p. 218, 1931.

16. "There is no sense of distance or separation from the thing, such as attends purely conceptual knowledge. All the activities of the self are loosed in enjoyment, unanimous in a single activity which breaks through the framework of aspects enclosing our ordinary rational activity, and which experiences for a moment or longer a reality that is really possessed. Now is the mind most alive, and at peace: the thing is present, held and delighted in" (Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience*, pp. 78-79. paraphrasing St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-I, q IV, a. 3 ad 1).
17. "It is inevitable that the artist should be unintelligible because his sensitive nature, inspired by fascination, bewilderment, and excitement, expresses itself in the profound and intuitive terms of ineffable wonder" (E. F. Rothschild, *The Meaning of Unintelligibility in Modern Art*, University of Chicago Press, 1934, p. 98). It has also been well said that Plato "was actively hostile to all that we mean by art". It may be inferred that Plato was right.
18. Wilhelm and Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, London, 1932; Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (Ch. III), New York, 1933.





# An Approach To Indian Art\*

## I. PRINCIPLES

It has often been emphasized that "Asia is one". This should be understood both geographically and historically. To enunciate the principles of Indian art is to enunciate the essentials of artistic expression in Asia, as these have been preserved in an unbroken continuity from the stone age until very recent times. It is less often realised that with only two exceptions, viz. that of the classical decadence and that of the modern (post-mediaeval) period, one and the same view of the nature and significance of "art" has prevailed throughout the world. It is only because we ourselves are of and inured to one of the irregular phases of civilisation referred to above that what in a larger view may be described as normal to humanity, and is exemplified equally in mediaeval Christian and in Hindu art, appears to us either enigmatic or arbitrary.

In the normal view of art, defined as the embodiment in tangible material of a preconceived form, the function of art is always practical, the work of art being ordered either to the communication of a thesis or to some physically useful end. No hard line can be drawn between these functions; the fresco invites us to consider its thesis, the house to warmth and shelter, at the same time that the fresco is a piece of furniture, and the house by its proportions and design appeals to the intellect as well as to the shivering flesh. And in fact, a distinction of fine (or useless) from applied (useful or decorative) art, and of the artist from the craftsman, has only been attempted in those aberrant ages in which genius is confused with art and the artist is regarded as a special kind of man distinguished from all others by his sensibility.

To be objectively beautiful is not then the sole or final end of the work; it is not merely to satisfy the greedy eye and itching ear that humanity, even under conditions when the urgent problems of food and shelter might have seemed to leave no time for a consideration of "higher things" made common objects beautiful without suspecting that there could be an industry without

\* Being A. K. Coomaraswamy's Introduction to the Catalogue of An Exhibition of Indian Art, Heeramanek Galleries, New York 1935 (Boston October 1935); first published under this title in *Parnassus* VII, 7 (1935) 17-20



art such as we now observe in civilised communities. Art is traditionally of divine origin and all the forms employed in the making of anything whatever are those of intellectual prototypes, a point of view that survives in India even today.

The function of objective beauty in the work of art is to attract us to the theme or use of the object before us. The measure of this objective beauty is that of the clarity with which the artefact makes its communication. Anything is beautiful in its own way to the extent that it really and fully is what it purports to be; a work of art is beautiful to the extent that it realises its maker's intention. But the appreciation of this beauty is often difficult in an unfamiliar kind of art because we are habituated to other kinds of beauty or are not interested in the original purposes of the work, to which its beauty conduces. In other words, a confusion of beauty with taste (what we like or dislike) arises as soon as we consider the object not from the maker's but from our own point of view. Yet there can be no judgment or enjoyment (apart from the comfortable sensations which may be stimulated by its physical shape, color, or sound, etc.) of a work of art, without a knowledge of the maker's intention; for example, we cannot say "This is a good Buddha image" unless we know what such an image ought to be like, that is what Buddha-idea subsisted in the mental world of those who made Buddha images for good and sufficient reasons of their own, and not for us to treat as bric-a-brac.

Just as the unfamiliar beauty may not attract us so the language in which the unfamiliar art expounds its thesis may, and to some extent must be obscure to us. Insofar as the work is known to us only by sensation, which though they may be pleasant or unpleasant in themselves are not intelligible simply as sensations, it is not understood; to understand, to receive the communication, we must know how the shapes and colors which are the sources of the sense impressions have been selected and arranged in such a manner as to be communicative. We must, in other words, understand the conventions of the art; for though the principle of language may be one, the dialects are necessarily various.

Every school of art has thus its own conventions and its own style, for although all men can think like thoughts we can only express these ideas in our own peculiar manner; and although the fundamental needs of humanity are the same, they are not in all respects the same, or may not be recognized as such because they are served in a different way. To resume, if we assume that in connection with the exotic art a preliminary curiosity is to be replaced by pleasure and understanding (or if not, what has brought the visitor to such



an exhibition as this?), two things are required: we must in the first place learn to react to an unfamiliar beauty, must acquire new tastes, and in the second must acquire a new vocabulary of form. Both are necessary for enjoyment, the first for sensuous, the second for intellectual satisfaction. To be content with the first is to rest in aestheticism and the "love of art"; the second, as explained above, is prerequisite for judgment, which "is the perfection of art". In both respects a certain degree of facility must be attained, so that we may enjoy without conscious effort, and understand without parsing. So long as any sense of strangeness is felt, we remain outsiders.

A certain discipline is thus demanded. This is not so much a discipline of scholarly application as it is one of the abandonment of prejudice. Most of our resistance arises in the latter connection. We do not like to enlarge our sympathies, nor to consent to themes which we may have been accustomed to regard, for example, as "pagan" or "immoral". But these are the prices to be paid for culture; to judge all things by an inherited taste is precisely to be "provincial".

We are afraid of losing ourselves, which is precisely what is involved in eclecticism. But eclecticism, or subjection to alien influences, is almost the opposite of what we mean by culture; to try to do ourselves what is naturally done by others, to indulge in a "chinoiserie", implies a fundamental misunderstanding of the significance of style, and can only result in caricature. What is asked is something harder than to be dilettante in this fashion: viz. to be patient, to recognize that what at first impresses us as merely odd may have been inevitable and altogether right in its own environment, to respect the idiosyncrasy of others no less than our own.

Most of our difficulties arise from a consideration of things apart from their context. It may readily be granted for example, that even the finest Hindu image is incongruously related and in this sense unlovely on the drawing-room mantelpiece. One who actually sees its beauty does not really see it there on the mantelpiece, but in a mentally reconstructed original environment. What we require is to restore the context. If we cannot literally visit foreign countries or actually consort with long dead men, we can do so in the spirit; it is here that the teacher of "art appreciation" or the "history of art" can help us if he will; all our catalogues and guides are for this, and not merely to rationalise our sensitivity to textures or our appreciation of interior-decorative values.

The bridges to be crossed are not so long as might at first appear. The general end of art is man, and human nature itself, which "is in a manner all



things", provides the essential basis for an understanding of all its varied manifestations. As to the objective beauty, there is a basis of agreement on fundamentals, diversity belonging only to accident; once we have realised that our own idiosyncrasy is not an absolute standard but merely a specific modality, the very fact of variation reminds us of a norm in which all variation is implicit (just as many effects inhere in a single cause) and in which all are one. Tastes may differ, but that about which tastes differ remains unaltered in human nature. Similarly as regards the communicated ideologies; all of these are variants or dialects of a common intellectual inheritance, and even the symbols employed in communication are identical or interchangeable, as may be illustrated by a conspicuous example, that of the rose and lotus, employed alike in Christian and Indian art and with the same significance, that is with reference to the ground of all being. And thus at last, those very differentiations which at first precluded sympathy become the means of mutual understanding, and being attracted by the specific beauties of one another's arts, the barriers of race and language are broken down.

## II. HISTORY

Everything anterior to the fourth century B. C. is strictly speaking pre-historic. Culturally there is supposed to have been a non-Aryan foundation, overlaid, perhaps about 1500 B. C. by immigrant Aryan elements. For the latter we have no positive archeological evidence. What we actually possess is the remains of the highly evolved non-Aryan "Indus Valley Culture" of the third millennium B.C. made known by the excavation of the last fifteen years. The aesthetic and religious connections of this culture with that of the later Indian cycle of two millennia beginning about 400 B. C. are evident.

The Indus Valley Culture is that of a people living in well planned cities, with brick buildings and elaborate drainage systems. All the fundamentals of civilisation are already present. Metal work, mainly in silver, copper, and bronze, is far advanced. Sculpture in the round is represented by examples far more modern in aspect than might have been expected. Even more notable as works of art are the very numerous engraved seals and seal impressions; a few types of these have been found also in datable Mesopotamian sites, and suffice to prove at least a trade relationship between Indian and Western Asia as early as the third millennium B. C. The Indus Valley religion included a cult of the mother-goddess, that of a prototype of the later Indian Siva, and that of a deity of vegetation; amongst the symbols employed are many that recur in later Indian use, as well as in other cultures.



Relations with Western Asia were maintained throughout the prehistoric period. Apart from material evidences, we may point out (1) that the patterns of Vedic ("Aryan") and Sumerian metaphysics are in many respects the same, and (2) that Early Indian art (about 200 B.C. to 50 A.D.) preserves formulae and methods that are closely related to those of Assyrian art in the seventh and eighth centuries B. C. (these resemblances being more conspicuous than those of Early Indian and Achaemenid art). To what extent the correspondences of Indian and Western Asiatic art at any given time may be ascribed to borrowing, or how far to parallel inheritance cannot yet be proved; that there existed an ancient cultural foundation common to both is certain.

What has been said above will serve to suggest the rich and varied background and heritage against and on which the expansion of art in India took place from the early centuries B.C. onwards. Nevertheless the art of the later cycle of two millennia may be called complete and comprehensive in itself. Whereas Vedic doctrine had been metaphysical rather than religious, the new art coincides with a partial transference of prestige from the spiritual to the temporal power and the corresponding rise of several closely connected types of devotional belief. Still the continuity of tradition in both fields is preserved, inasmuch as both religion and art are rather adaptations of than contrary to Vedic formulation; Hinduism remaining altogether orthodox, while Buddhism and Jainism are only in part and rather nominally than essentially heterodox. There is hardly anything in the iconography of any Indian "sectarian" art that is not a Vedic origin, or that can be understood without a reference either to the Vedic tradition or some other branch of the "universal and unanimous tradition".

The dominating necessities of early Indian art are then those of embodying a concept of the first and highest principle in the likeness of a worshipful deity, and those of the narration of ancient myths now more literally and historically interpreted in the interests of edification. The Buddha type is adapted from that of the Yaksha, once a designation of the supreme deity and later of various tutelary divinities. This early type is monumental in the extreme, the figures being often above life size and no less impressive in their suggestion of the operation of a catalytic power than they are in actual scale. At the same time the narrative art with which the surfaces of Buddhist buildings are covered is fascinating in its clarity. The greater part of this early art is more or less "primitive" in the laudatory sense of the word; it is entirely controlled by its themes, and at the same time sensuous. This combination of intellectual and sensuous elements is characteristic of Indian art throughout its expansion.



In the earlier centuries of the Christian era, and notably at Amaravati, a more sophisticated elegance makes its appearance, reminding us of the now more deliberate artistry of the contemporary literature. The classic phase is reached in the Gupta period (4th to 7th century). The sculptor and painter are now in full possession of their art and able to deal with any problem. The transubstantiation of natural form is achieved in a type of unforgettable serenity in which all conflict of contemplation and passion is resolved in a unity of inner and outer life. The sculptured or painted figure and its architectural setting are no longer separable, but presuppose one another.

In the meantime on the North West frontier, Hellenistic influence had resulted in the development of another Buddha type, equally Indian in iconography, but western in feeling, that is to say illusionistic in intention, which the purely Indian art had never been. Some traces of this influence can be recognized at Amaravati, but can hardly be traced in the Gupta and later schools; on the other hand it leaves a more definite impression in Central Asia, where its earlier incongruities and flaccidities are reanimated by a local vitality that results in a school of stucco sculpture strangely anticipatory of Gothic (Mahayana Buddhist and Christian themes being intrinsically similar, this is made conspicuous in the corresponding arts, developed in each case from the same late classical prototypes).

Before and during the Gupta period orthodox Hinduism has already, like Buddhism, begun to employ permanent materials for its architecture and sculpture. It may be emphasised in this connection that the "sectarian" arts in India are differentiated only by the details of their iconography and not by their style, which is a function of period rather than of cult. The classical Gupta style originates in Northern and Central India, and in its Buddhist phases becomes the main source of the Buddhist art of Eastern and South Eastern Asia. At the same time in its Hindu phases the Gupta types, followed by those of the slightly later South Indian Pallava school (7th-9th century), establish those of the Hindu art of the Indianised kingdoms of South Eastern Asia and notably Cambodia. This grafted art very soon expands upon its own roots, native ethnic concepts gradually remoulding the Indian prototype, so that we must call these rather independent than merely colonial arts.

The mediaeval period in India is mainly one of the crystallisation and preservation of existing types. Styles become more local, and there is a concurrent iconographic and stylistic elaboration. The principal styles are those of the Pala (Bengal and Orissa. 8th-12th century) and Cola (Southern India, 10th-12th century) schools. After this time, with the decline of Buddhism, there is no longer to be found a specifically Buddhist art except of course in



Ceylon and South Eastern Asia, and in Nepal; in the latter area the vitality and elegance of the earlier Buddhist and Hindu art survive well into the fifteenth century. Painting is represented by at least three important schools: Western Indian, represented mainly in Jaina Mss. ranging from the tenth to the seventeenth century; the Bengali-Nepalese represented mainly in Buddhist Mss. of like date; and the Rajput, executed on walls or paper ranging from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, and concerned entirely with Hindu subjects, amongst which the illustrations of the Krishna cycle and of the musical modes play the most conspicuous parts. This is the last of the great styles.

Muhammadan conquests gradually extended through northern India from the twelfth century onwards resulted in the development of other forms of art, mainly in sculpture and painting, with a combined foreign and native basis. The Mughal school of painting (16th-18th century) is closely related to the Rajput, but secular and historical in its interest, and stylistically eclectic, uniting Persian, Indian, and European elements.

It may be said in summary that the Indian cycle of two millennia embraces a stylistic sequence that passes normally from primitive through a classic to "baroque" styles. As in other cycles the sequence is one of decline rather than of progress, although the quality of primitive vitality recurs at various moments, notably in early Rajput painting. In one important respect, however, the Indian cycle differs radically from the European. In Europe, the fundamental principles of the fifth to twelfth centuries are abandoned and an altogether new direction pursued; thereafter the properly symbolic language and ideal references of Christian art are gradually obscured by statements of observed fact and the intrusion of the artist's personality. Nothing of this sort happened or could have happened in Hindu India; by "decadence" in India one means, not an abandonment of orthodox tradition and of ascertained methods, but a relatively infirm contemplation that inevitably finds expression in a lessened energy of operation; there is a loss of animation. The formal virtues of Indian art survive at the present day in folk art and to some extent in the hieratic and conservative tradition of the south. It is only in Mughal painting that any real kinship with the spirit of the European Renaissance can be recognized, in that both are animated by a curiosity about appearances and an interest in personality.





# Is Art A Superstition, Or A Way Of Life?\*

By a superstition we mean something that "stands over" from a former time, and which we no longer understand and no longer have any use for. By a way of life, we mean a habit conducive to man's good, and in particular to the attainment of man's last and present end of happiness.

It seems to be a matter of general agreement at the present day that "Art" is a part of the higher things of life, to be enjoyed in hours of leisure earned by other hours of inartistic "Work". We find accordingly as one of the most obvious characteristics of our culture a class division of artists from workmen, of those for example who paint on canvas from those who paint the walls of houses, and of those who handle the pen from those who handle the hammer. We are certainly not denying here that there is a distinction of the contemplative from the active life, nor of free from servile operation : but mean to say that in our civilization we have in the first place made an absolute divorce of the contemplative from the active life, and in the second place substituted for the contemplative life an aesthetic life,—or as the term implies, a life of pleasure. We shall return to this point. In any case we have come to think of art and work as incompatible, or at least independent, categories and have for the first time in history created an industry without art.

Individualists and humanists as we are, we attach an inordinate value to personal opinion and personal experience, and feel an insatiable interest in the personal experiences of others; the work of art has come to be for us a sort of autobiography of the artist. Art having been abstracted from the general activity of making things for human use, material or spiritual, has come to mean

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for us the projection in a visible form of the feelings or reactions of the peculiarly-endowed personality of the artist, and especially of those most peculiarly-endowed personalities which we think of as "inspired" or describe in terms of genius. Because the artistic genius is mysterious we, who accept the humbler status of the workman, have been only too willing to call the artist a "prophet", and in return for his "vision" to allow him many privileges that a common man might hesitate to exercise. Above all we congratulate ourselves that the artist has been "emancipated" from what was once his position as the servant of church or state, believing that his mysterious imagination can operate best at random; if an artist like Blake still respects a traditional iconography we say that he is an artist in spite of it, and if as in Russia or Germany the state presumes to conscript the artist, it is even more the principle involved than the nature of the state itself that disturbs us. If we ourselves exercise a censorship necessitated by the moral inconvenience of certain types of art, we feel it needful at least to make apologies. Whereas it was once the highest purpose of life to achieve a freedom *from* oneself, it is now our will to secure the greatest possible measure of freedom *for* oneself, no matter from what.

Despite the evidence of our environment, with its exaggerated standards of living, and equally depreciated standards of life, our conception of history is optimistically based on the idea of "progress"; we designate cultures of the past or those of other peoples as relatively "barbaric" and our own as relatively "civilised", never reflecting that such prejudgments, which are really wish-fulfillments, may be very far from fact. The student of the history of art discovers, indeed, in every art cycle a decline from a primitive power to a refinement of sentimentality or cynicism. But being a sentimentalist, materialist, cynic, or more briefly a humanist himself, he is able to think what he likes, and to argue that the primitive or savage artist "drew like that" because he knew no better; because he (whose knowledge of nature was so much greater and more intimate than that of the "civilized" or "city" man) had not learnt to see things as they are, was not acquainted with anatomy or perspective, and therefore drew like a child ! We are indeed careful to explain that when we speak of an imitation of nature or study of nature we do not mean a "photographic" imitation, but rather an imitation of nature as experienced by the individual artist, or finally a representation of the nature of the artist as experienced by himself. Art is then "self-expression," but still an imitation of nature as effect, and essentially figurative rather than formal.

On the other hand we have said to ourselves that in the greatest works of art there is always a quality of abstraction, and have invoked the Platonic endorsement of a geometrical beauty; we have said, Go to, let us also make



use of abstract formulae. It was overlooked here that the abstract formulae of ancient art were its natural vehicle, and not a personal or even local invention but the common language of the world. The result of the modern interest in abstraction as such, and apart from questions of content and communicability, has been indeed to eliminate recognizability in art, but scarcely to modify its still essentially representative purpose. Personal symbolisms have been evolved which are not based on any natural correspondences of things to principles, but rather on private associations of ideas. The consequence is that every abstract artist must be individually "explained": the art is not communicative of ideas, but like the remainder of contemporary art, only serves to provoke reactions.

What is then the peculiar endowment of the artist, so much valued? It is evidently, and by general consent, a special sensibility, and it is just for this reason that the modern terms "aesthetic" and "empathy" have been found so appropriate. By sensibility we mean of course an emotional sensibility; *aisthesis* in Hellenistic usage implying physical affectibility as distinguished from mental operations. We speak of a work of art as "felt" and never of its "truth", or only of its truth to nature or natural feeling; "appreciation" is a "feeling into" the work. Now an emotional reaction is evoked by whatever we like (or dislike, but as we do not think of works of art as intended to provoke disgust, we need only consider them here as sources of pleasure): what we like, we call beautiful, admitting at the same time that matters of taste are not subject to law. The purpose of art is then to reveal a beauty that we like or can be taught to like; the purpose of art is to give pleasure; the work of art as the source of pleasure is its own end; art is for art's sake. We value the work for the pleasure to be derived from the sight, sound, or touch of its aesthetic surfaces; our conception of beauty is literally skin-deep; questions of utility and intelligibility rarely arise, and if they arise are dismissed as irrelevant. If we propose to dissect the pleasure derived from a work of art, it becomes a matter of psycho-analysis, and ultimately a sort of science of affections and behaviours. If we nevertheless sometimes make use of such high-sounding expressions as "significant form", we do so ignoring that nothing can properly be called a "sign" that is not significant of something other than itself, and for the sake of which it exists. We think of "composition" as an arrangement of masses designed for visual comfort, rather than as determined by the logic of a given content. Our theoretical knowledge of the material and technical bases of art, and of its actual forms, is encyclopaedic; but we are either indifferent to its *raison d'être* and final cause, or find this ultimate reason and justification for the very existence of the work in the pleasure to be derived from its beauty by the patron. We say the patron; but under present conditions, it is oftener for



his own than for the patron's pleasure that the artist works; the perfect patron being nowadays, not the man who knows what he wants, but the man who is willing to commission the artist to do whatever he likes, and thus as we express it, "respects the freedom of the artist." The consumer, the man, is at the mercy of the manufacturer for pleasure, (the "artist") and manufacturer for profit (the "exploiter") : and these two are more nearly the same than we suspect.

To say that art is essentially a matter of feeling is to say that its sufficient purpose is to please; the work of art is then a luxury, accessory to the life of pleasure. It may be enquired, Are not pleasures legitimate ? Do not the office worker and factory hand deserve and need more pleasures than are normally afforded by the colourless routine of wage-earning tasks ? Assuredly. But there is a profound distinction between the deliberate pursuit of pleasure and the enjoyment of pleasures proper to the active or contemplative life. *It is one of the gravest counts against our civilization that the pleasures afforded by art, whether in the making or of subsequent appreciation, are not enjoyed or even supposed to be enjoyed by the workman at work.* It is taken for granted that while at work we are doing what we like least, and while at play what we should wish to be doing all the time. And this is a part of what we meant by speaking of our depreciated standards of life : it is not so shocking that the workman should be underpaid, as that he should not be able to delight as much in what he does for hire as in what he does by free choice. It is an inevitable consequence of production under such conditions that quality is sacrificed to quantity : an industry without art provides a necessary apparatus of existence, houses, clothing, frying pans, and so forth, but an apparatus lacking the essential characteristics of things made by art, the characteristics, viz. of beauty and significance. Hence we say that the life that we call civilized is more nearly an animal and mechanical life than a human life; and that in all these respects it contrasts unfavourably with the life of savages, of American Indians for example, to whom it had never occurred that manufacture, the activity of making things for use, could ever be made an artless activity.

Most of us take for granted the conception of art and artists outlined above, and so completely that we not only accept its consequences for ourselves, but misinterpret the art and artists of former ages and other cultures in terms that are only appropriate to our own historically provincial point of view. Undisturbed by our own environment, we assume that the artist has always been a peculiar person, that artist and patron have always been at cross purposes, and that work has always been thought of as a necessary evil.



But let us now consider what we have often called the "normal view of art", meaning by "normal" a theory not merely hitherto and elsewhere universally accepted as basic to the structure of society, but also a correct or upright doctrine of art. We shall find that this normal, traditional, and orthodox view of art contradicts in almost every particular with the aesthetic doctrines of our time, and shall imply that the common wisdom of the world may have been superior to our own, adding that a thorough understanding of the traditional meaning of "art" and theory of "beauty" are indispensable for the serious student of the history of art, whose business it is to explain the genesis of works of art produced for patrons with whose purposes and interests we are no longer familiar.

To begin with, then, the active life of a man consists on the one hand in doing, and on the other in making or arranging things with a view to efficient doing : broadly speaking, man as doer is the patron, and man as maker the artist. The patron knows what purpose is to be served, for example, he needs shelter. The artist knows how to construct what is required, namely a house. Everyone is naturally a doer, patron, and consumer; and at the same time an artist, that is to say a maker by art, in some specialized sense, for example either a painter, carpenter, or farmer. There is a division of labour, and for whatever a man does not make for himself he commissions another professional the shoemaker, for example, when he needs shoes, or the author when he needs a book. In any case, in such relatively unanimous societies as we are considering, societies whose form is predetermined by traditional conceptions of order and meaning, there can hardly arise an opposition of interest as between patron and artist; both require the same kind of shoes, or worship at the same shrines, and fashions changing only slowly and imperceptibly, so that under these conditions it has been truly said that "Art has fixed ends, and ascertained means of operation."

In the normal society as envisaged by Plato, or realized in a feudal social order or caste system, occupation is vocational, and usually hereditary; it is intended at least that every man shall be engaged in the useful occupation for which he is best fitted by nature, and in which therefore he can best serve the society to which he belongs and at the same time realize his own perfection. As everyone makes use of things that are made artfully, as the designation "artefact" implies, and everyone possesses an art of some sort, whether of painting, sculpture, blacksmithing, weaving, cookery or agriculture, no necessity is felt to explain the nature of art in general, but only to communicate a knowledge of particular arts to those who are to practise them; which knowledge is regularly passed on from master to apprentice, without there being



any necessity for "schools of art". An integrated society of this sort can function harmoniously for millennia, in the absence of external interference. On the other hand, the contentment of innumerable peoples can be destroyed in a generation by the withering touch of our civilization; the local market is flooded by a production in quantity with which the responsible maker by art can not compete; the vocational structure of society, with all its guild organization and standards of workmanship, is undermined; the artist is robbed of his art and forced to find himself a "job"; until finally the ancient society is industrialized and reduced to the level of such societies as ours, in which business takes precedence of life. Can one wonder that western nations are feared and hated by other peoples, not alone for obvious political or economic reasons, but even more profoundly and instinctively for spiritual reasons ?

What is art, or rather what was art ? In the first place the property of the artist, a kind of knowledge and skill by which he knows, not what ought to be made, but how to imagine the form of the thing that is to be made, and how to embody this form in suitable material, so that the resulting artefact may be used. The shipbuilder builds, not for aesthetic reasons, but in order that men may be able to sail on the water; it is a matter of fact that the well-built ship will be beautiful, but it is not for the sake of making something beautiful that the shipbuilder goes to work; it is a matter of fact that a well made icon will be beautiful, in other words that it will please when seen by those for whose use it was made, but the imager is casting his bronze primarily for use and not as a mantelpiece ornament or museum show-case.

Art can then be defined as the embodiment in material of a preconceived form. The artist's operation is dual, in the first place intellectual or "free" and in the second place manual and "servile". "To be properly expressed", as Eckhart says, "a thing must proceed from within, moved by its form". It is just as necessary that the idea of the work to be done should first of all be imagined in an imitable form as that the workman should command the technique by which this mental image can be imitated in the available material. "It is", as Augustine says, "by their ideas that we judge of what things ought to be like". A private property in ideas is inconceivable, since ideas have no existence apart from the intellect that entertains them and of which they are the forms; there cannot be an authorship of ideas, but only an entertainment, whether by one or many intellects is immaterial. It is not then in the ideas to be expressed in art, or to speak more simply not in the themes of his work, that an artist's intellectual operation is spoken of as "free"; the nature of the ideas to be expressed in art is predetermined by a traditional doctrine, ultimately of superhuman origin, and through the authority of which the necessity of a clear



and repeated expression of such and such ideas has come to be accepted without question. As Aristotle expresses it, the general end of art is the good of man. This is a matter of religious art only in this sense, that in a traditional society there is little or nothing that can properly be called secular; whatever the material uses of artefacts, we find that what we, (who scarcely distinguish in principle are from millinery), describe as their ornamentation or decoration, has always a precise significance; no distinction can be drawn between the ideas expressed in the humblest peasant art of a given period and those expressed in the actually hieratic arts of the same period. We cannot too often repeat that the art of a traditional society expresses throughout its range the governing ideology of the group; art has fixed ends and ascertained means of operation; art is a conscience about form, precisely as prudence is a conscience about conduct,—a conscience in both senses of the word, i. e. both as rule and as awareness. Hence it is that we can speak of a conformity or non-conformity in art, just as we can of regular and irregular, orderly and disorderly in conduct. Good art is no more a matter of moods than good conduct a matter of inclination; both are habits; it is the recollected man, and not the excited man, who can either make or do well.

On the other hand, nothing can be known or stated except in some way; the way of the individual knower. Whatever may be known to you and me in common can only be stated by either of us each in our own way. At any given moment these ways of different individuals will be and are so much alike as to be pleasing and intelligible to all concerned; but in proportion as the psychology and somatology of the group changes with time, so will the ways of knowing and idiom of expression; an iconography may not vary for millennia, and yet the style of every century will be distinct and recognizable at a glance. It is in this respect that the intellectual operation is called free; the style is the man, and that in which the style of one individual or period differs from that of another is the infallible trace of the artist's personal nature; not a deliberate, but an unconscious self-expression of the free man.

The orator whose sermon is not the expression of a private opinion or philosophy, but the exposition of a traditional doctrine, is speaking with perfect freedom, and originally; the doctrine is his not as having invented it, but by conformation (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*). Even in direct citation he is not a parrot, but giving out of himself a recreated theme. The artist is the servant of the work to be done; and it is as true here as in the realm of conduct that "My service is perfect freedom". It is only a lip-service that can be called servile; only when an inherited formula has become an "art form", or "ornament", to be imitated as such without any understanding of its significance,



that the artist, no longer a traditional craftsman but an academician, can properly be called a forger and servile. Our repetition of classic forms in modern architecture is generally a forgery in this sense; the manufacturer of "brummagen idols" is both a forger and a prostitute; but the hereditary craftsman, who may be repeating formulae inherited from the stone age, remains an original artist until he is forced by economic pressure to accept the status of a parasite supplying the demand of the ignorant tourist in search of drawing-room ornaments and what he calls "the mysterious East."

Where an idea to be expressed remains the same throughout long sequences of stylistic variation, it is evident that this idea remains the motif or motivating power behind the work; the artist has worked throughout for the sake of the idea to be expressed, although expressing this idea always in his own way. The primary necessity is that he should really have entertained the idea and always visualized it in an intangible form; and this, implying an intellectual activity that must be ever renewed, is what we mean by originality as distinguished from novelty, and by power as distinguished from violence. It will readily be seen then, that in concentrating our attention on the stylistic peculiarities of works of art, we are confining it to a consideration of accidents, and really only amusing ourselves with a psychological analysis of personalities; not by any means penetrating to what is constant and essential in the art itself.

The manual operation of the artist is called servile, because similitude is with respect to the form; in writing down, for example, the form of a musical composition that has already been heard mentally, or even in performance as such, the artist is no longer free, but an imitator of what he has himself imagined. In such a servility there is certainly nothing dishonorable, but rather a continued loyalty to the good of the work to be done; the artist turns from intellectual to manual operation or vice versa at will, and when the work has been done, he judges its "truth" by measuring the actual form of the artefact against the mental image of it that was his before the work began and remains in his consciousness regardless of what may happen to the work itself. We can now perhaps begin to realize just what we have done in separating artist from craftsman and "fine" from "applied" art. We have assumed that there is one kind of man that can imagine, and another that cannot; or to speak more honestly, another kind whom we cannot afford, without doing hurt to business, to allow to imagine, and to whom we therefore permit a servile and imitative operation *only*. Just as the operation of the artist who merely imitates nature as closely as possible, or as an archaist merely imitates the forms and formulae of ancient art without attempting any recreation of ideas in terms of his own



constitution, is a servile operation, so is that of the mason required to carve, whether by hand or machinery, innumerable copies or "ornaments" for which he is provided with ready-made designs, for which another man is responsible, or which may be simply "superstitions," that is to say "art forms," of which the ideal content is no longer understood, and which are nothing but the vestiges of originally living traditions. It is precisely in our modern world that everyone is nominally, and no one really "free."

Art has also been defined as "the imitation of nature in her manner of operation"; that is to say, an imitation of nature, not as effect, but as cause. Nature is here, of course, "Natura naturans, Creatrix, Deus," and by no means our own already natured environment. All traditions lay a great stress on the analogy of the human and divine artificers, both alike being "makers by art," or "by a word conceived in intellect." As the Indian books express it. "We must build as did the Gods in the beginning." All this is only to say again in other words that "similitude is with respect to the form." "Imitation" is the embodiment in matter of a preconceived form; and that is precisely what we mean by "creation." The artist is the providence of the work to be done.

All of our modern teaching centres round the posed model and the dissecting room; our conceptions of portraiture are as a matter of historical fact associated in their origins with the charnel house and death mask. On the other hand, we begin to see now why primitive and traditional and what we have described as normal art is "abstract"; it is an imitation, not of a visible and transient appearance or "effect of light," but of an intelligible form which need no more resemble any natural object than a mathematical equation need look like its locus in order to be "true." It is one thing to draw in linear rhythms and abstract light, because one must; another thing for anyone who is not by nature and in the philosophical sense a realist, deliberately to cultivate an abstracted style.

The principles of traditional criticism follow immediately from what has been said above. The work of art is "true" to the extent that its actual or accidental form reflects the essential form conceived in the mind of the artist (it is in this sense that the workman still speaks of "trueing" the work in hand); and adequate, or apt, if this form has been correctly conceived with respect to the final cause of the work, which is to be used by the patron. This distinction of judgments, which normally coincide in unanimous cultures, is of particular value to the modern student of ancient or exotic arts, for which we have no longer a practical use. The modern aesthetician thinks that he has done enough if he "feels into" the work, since he holds that the secret of art resides



in a peculiar sensibility outwardly manifested as an aesthetic urge to express and communicate a feeling; he does not realize that ancient works of art were produced, devoutly indeed, but primarily to serve a purpose and to communicate a gnosis. What was demanded of the traditional artist was first and foremost to be in possession of his art, that is to be in possession of a knowledge, rather than a sentiment. We forget that sensation is an animal property, and knowledge distinctively human; and that art, if thought of as distinctly human and particularly if we think of art as a department of the "higher things of life," must likewise have to do much more with knowledge than with feeling. We ought not, then, as Herbert Spinden so cleverly puts it, to "accept a pleasurable effect upon our unintelligent nerve ends as an index of understanding."

The critic of ancient or exotic art, having only the work of art before him, and nothing but the aesthetic surfaces to consider, can only register reactions, and proceed to a dimensional and chemical analysis of matter, and psychological analysis of style. His knowledge is of the sort defined as accidental, and very different from the essential and practical knowledge of the original artist and patron. One can in fact only be said to have understood the work, or to have any more than a dilettante knowledge of it, to the extent that he can identify himself with the mentality of the original artist and patron. The man can only be said to have understood Romanesque or Indian art who comes very near to forgetting that he has not made it himself for his own use; a man is only qualified to translate an ancient text when he has really participated in, and not merely observed, the outer and inner life of its time, and identified this time with his own. All this evidently requires a far longer, more round about, and self-denying discipline than is commonly associated with the study of the history of art, which generally penetrates no farther than an analysis of styles, and certainly not to an analysis of the necessary reasons of iconographies or logic of composition.

There is also a traditional doctrine of beauty. This theory of beauty is not developed with respect to artefacts alone, but universally. It is independent of taste, for it is recognized that as Augustine says, there are those who take pleasure in deformities. The word deformity is significant here, because it is precisely a formal beauty that is in question; and we must not forget that "formal" includes the connotation "formative." The recognition of beauty depends on judgment, not on sensation; the beauty of the aesthetic surfaces depending on their information, and not upon themselves. Everything whether natural or artificial, is beautiful to the extent that it really is [what it purports to be, and independently of all comparisons; or ugly to the extent that its own form is not expressed and realized in its tangible actuality. The work of art is



beautiful, accordingly, in terms of perfection, or truth and aptitude as defined above; whatever is inept or vague cannot be considered beautiful, however it may be valued by those who "know what they like." So far from that, the veritable connoisseur "likes what he knows"; having fixed upon that course of art which is right, use has made it pleasant.

Whatever is well and truly made, will be beautiful in kind because of its perfection. There are no degrees of perfection; just as we cannot say that a frog is any more or less beautiful than a man, whatever our preferences may be, so we cannot possibly say that a telephone booth as such is any more or less beautiful than a cathedral as such; we only think that one is more beautiful than the other in kind, because our actual experience is of unlovely booths and really beautiful cathedrals.

It is taken for granted that the artist is always working "for the good of the work to be done"; from the coincidence of beauty with perfection it follows inevitably that his operation always tends to the production of a beautiful work. But this is a very different matter from saying that the artist has always in view to discover and communicate beauty. Beauty in the master craftsman's atelier is not a final cause of the work to be done, but an inevitable accident. And for this reason, that the work of art is always occasional; it is the nature of a rational being to work for particular ends, whereas beauty is an indeterminate end; whether the artist is planning a picture, a song, or a city, he has in view to make that thing and nothing else. What the artist has in mind is to do the job "right," *secundum rectam rationem artis* : it is the philosopher who brings in the word "beautiful" and expounds its condition in terms of perfection, harmony, and clarity. A recognition of the fact that things can only be beautiful in kind, and not in one another's kinds, and the conception of the formality of beauty, bring us back again to the futility of a naturalistic art; the beauties of a living man and of a statue or stone man are different in kind and not interchangeable; the more we try to make the statue look like a man, the more we denature the stone and caricature the man. It is the form of a man in a nature of flesh that constitutes the beauty of this man; the form of a man in a nature of stone the beauty of the statue; and these two beauties are incompatible.

Beauty is, then, perfection apprehended as an attractive power; that aspect of the truth for example which moves the will to grapple with the theme to be communicated. In mediaeval phraseology, "beauty adds to the good an ordering to the cognitive faculty by which the good is known as such"; "beauty has to do with cognition." If we ourselves endeavour to speak well, it is for the sake of clarity alone, and we should much rather be called interesting than



mellifluous. To quote a Hasidic example; if any should say, "Let us now hear you talk of your doctrine, you speak so beautifully," 'May I be struck dumb are I speak beautifully'. " But if beauty is not synonymous with truth, neither can it be isolated from the truth : the distinction is logical, but there is coincidence *in re*. Beauty is at once a symptom and an invitation; as truth is apprehended by the intellect, so beauty moves the will; beauty is always ordered to reproduction, whether a physical generation or spiritual regeneration. To think of beauty as a thing to be enjoyed apart from use is to be a naturalist, a fetishist, and an idolater.

Nothing more enrages the exhibitionist of modern art than to be asked, What is it about? or What is it for ? He will exclaim, You might as well ask what it looks like! In fact, however, the question and answer are on altogether different planes of reference; we have agreed that the work of art by no means needs to look like anything on earth, and is perhaps the worse the more it tends to create an illusion. It is another matter if we demand an intelligibility and functional efficacy in the work. For what are we to do with it, intellectually or physically, if it has no meaning and is not adapted to be used ? All that we can do in this case is to like it or dislike it, much as bulls are said to love green and hate red.

The intelligibility of traditional art does not depend on recognitions but, like that of script, on legibility. The characters in which this art is written are properly called symbols; when meaning has been forgotten or ignored and art exists only for the comfort of the eye, these become "art forms" and are spoken of as "ornaments"; we speak of "decorative" values. Symbols in combination form an iconography or myth. Symbols are the universal language of art; an international language with merely dialectic variations, current once in all milieus and always intrinsically intelligible, though now no longer understood by educated men, and only to be seen or heard in the art of peasants. The content of symbols is metaphysical. Whatever work of traditional art we consider, whether a crucifix, Ionic column, peasant embroidery, or trappings of a horse, or nursery tale, has still, or had, a meaning over and above that may be called the immediate value of the object to us as a source of pleasure or necessity of life. This implies for us that we cannot pretend to have accounted for the genesis of any such work of art until we have understood what it was for and what it was intended to mean. The symbolic forms, which we call ornaments because they are only superstitions for us, are none the less the substance of the art before us; it is not enough to be able to use the terms of iconography freely and to be able to label our museum specimens correctly; to have understood them, we must understand the ultimate *raison d'être* of the iconography, just why it is as it is and not otherwise.



Implicit in this symbolism lies what was equally for artist and patron the ultimately spiritual significance of the whole undertaking. The references of the symbolic forms are as precise as those of mathematics. The adequacy of the symbols being intrinsic, and not a matter of convention, the symbols correctly employed transmit from generation to generation a knowledge of cosmic analogies : as above, so below. Some of us still repeat the prayer, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The artist is constantly represented as imitating heavenly forms,—“the crafts such as building and carpentry which give us matter in wrought forms....take their principles thence and from the thinking there” (Enneads, V. 9). The archetypal house, for example, repeats the architecture of the universe; a ground below, a space between, a vault above, in which there is an opening corresponding to the solar gateway by which one “escapes altogether” out of time and space into an unconfined and timeless empyrean. Functional and symbolic values coincide; if there rises a column of smoke to the luffer above, this is not merely a convenience, but also a representation of the axis of the universe that pillars apart heaven and earth, essence and nature, and is itself although without dimensions or consistency the adamant principle and exemplary form of temporal and spatial extension and of all things situated in time or space. This was doubtless already apparent to prehistoric man, though we cannot trace it farther back in literature than perhaps a millennium and a half B. C. Vestiges of the primitive luffer survive in the eyes of domes, and of its significance in the fact that even today we speak of Santa Claus, a doublet of the resurrected Sun, as entering in with his gifts, not by the human door, but by the chimney.

The worldwide designation of stone weapons as “thunderbolts” is a memory surviving from the stone age, when already primitive man identified his striking weapons with the shaft of lightning with which the solar Deity smote the Dragon, or if you prefer, St. Michael Satan, in the beginning; an iron age inherits older traditions, and literary evidences for an identification of weapons with lightning go back at least as far as second millennium B. C. All traditions agree in seeing in the warp of tissues made by hand an image of the fontal-raying of the dawn-light of creation, and in their woof the representation of planes of being or levels of reference more or less removed from, but still dependent on their common centre and ultimate support. Instances could be multiplied, but it will suffice to say that the arts have been universally referred to a divine source, that the practice of an art was at least as much a rite as a trade, that the craftsman had always to be initiated into the Lesser Mysteries of his particular craft, and that the artefact itself had always a double value, that of tool on the one hand and that of symbol on the other. These conditions survived in mediaeval Europe, and still survive precariously in the East, to the extent



that normal types of humanity have been able to resist the subversive influences of civilized business.

We are thus in a position to understand in part how both the making of things by art, and the use of things made by art subserved not only man's immediate convenience, but also his spiritual life; served in other words the whole or holy man, and not merely the outer man who feeds on "bread alone." The transubstantiation of the artefact had its inevitable corollary in a transformation of the man himself; the Templar, for example, whose sword was also a cross, had been initiated as and strove to become more than a man and as nearly as possible an hypostasis of the Sun. Now that the greater part of life has been secularized, these transformative values of art can be envisaged only in iconolatriy, where the icon made by hands and subsequently consecrated serves as a support of contemplation tending towards a transformation of the worshipper into the likeness of the archetypal form to which, and "not to the colours or the art" as St. Basil says, the honour is paid. The collector who owns a crucifix of the finest period and workmanship, and merely enjoys its "beauty," is in a very different position from that of the equally sensitive worshipper, who also feels its power, and is actually moved to take up his own cross; only the latter can be said to have understood the work in its entirety, only the former can be called a fetishist. In the same way, and as we have said elsewhere, the man who may have been a "barbarian" but could look upward to the roof tree of his house and say "There hangs the Light of Lights," or down to his hearth and say "There is the Centre of the World," was more completely a Man than one whose house, however well supplied with labour-saving and sanitary apparatus, is merely "a machine to live in."

It remains for us to consider the problems of artist and patron, producer and consumer, from the standpoint of ethics: to explain the traditional position, which asserts that there can be no "good use" without art; that is to say no efficient goodness, but only good intentions in case the means provided are defective. Suppose for example, that the artist is a printer; to the extent that he designs an illegible type, the book, however supremely valuable its text, will be "no good." Of a workman who bungles we say in the same way that he is "no good" or "good for nothing," or in the technical language of traditional ethics, that he is a "sinner" : "sin" being defined as "any departure from the order to the end," whatever the nature of the end.

Before the artist can even imagine a form there must have been a direction of the will towards a specific idea; since one cannot imagine "form" in the abstract, but only this or that form. In Indian terms, an image can only



spring from a "seed." Or as Bonaventura expresses it, "Every agent acting rationally, not at random, nor under compulsion, foreknows the thing before it is, viz. in a likeness, by which likeness, which is the 'idea' of the thing (in an imitable form), the thing is both known and brought into being." The artist's will has accordingly consented beforehand to the end in view; whether a good end or bad end is no longer his affair as an artist; it is too late now for qualms, and the artist as such has no longer any duty but to devote himself to the good of the work to be done. As St. Thomas expresses it, "Art does not require of the artist that his act be a good act, but that his work be good...Art does not presuppose rectitude of the appetite,"—but only to serve the appetite, whether for good or evil. It is for the man to decide what, if any, propaganda are desirable; for man as artist only to make the propagation effective. The artist may nevertheless come short, and in this case he is said to "sin as an artist": if, for example, he undertakes and proposes to manufacture an efficient poison gas, and actually produces something quite innocuous, or intends to fashion a Madonna, and only produces a fashion plate. The artist as such is an amoral type: at the same time there can be no good use, that is effective, use, without art.

Let us now remind ourselves that the artist is also a man, and as a man responsible for all that his will consents to; "in order that a man may make right use of his art, he needs to have a virtue which will rectify his appetite." The man is responsible directly, as a murderer for example by intent if he consents to manufacture adulterated food, or drugs in excess of medical requirement; responsible as a promoter of loose living if he exhibits a pornographic picture, (by which we mean, of course, something essentially salacious, preserving the distinction of "obscene" from "erotic"); responsible spiritually if he is a sentimentalist or pseudo-mystic. It is a mistake to suppose that in former ages the artist's "freedom" could have been arbitrarily denied by an external agency; it is much rather a plain and unalterable fact that the artist as such is not a free *man*. As artist he is morally irresponsible, indeed; but who can assert that he is an artist and not also a man? The artist can be separated from the man in logic and for purposes of understanding; but actually, the artist can only be divorced from his humanity by what is called a disintegration of personality. The doctrine of art for art's sake implies precisely such a sacrifice of humanity to art, of the whole to the part. It is significant that at the same time that individualistic tendencies are recognizable in the sphere of culture, in the other sphere of business and in the interest of profit most men are denied the opportunity of artistic operation altogether, or can function as responsible artists only in hours of leisure when they can pursue a "hobby" or play games. What shall it profit a man to be politically free, if he must be either the slave of "art," or slave of "business"?



Wa say then that if the artist as such is morally irresponsible, he is also a morally responsible *man*. In the normal and long-enduring types of civilization that we have been considering,—Indian, Egyptian, early Greek, mediaeval Christian, Chinese, Maori, or American Indian for example—it has been man as patron rather than man as artist with whom the decision has rested as to *what* shall be made: the freedom of the artist involving an autonomy only within his own sphere of operation, and not including a free choice of themes. That choice remained with the Man, and amounted to an effective censorship, though not a censorship in our sense, but in the last analysis a self-control, since the artist and the man were still of one mind, and all men in some sense artists. Nothing in fact was made that did not answer to a generally recognized necessity.

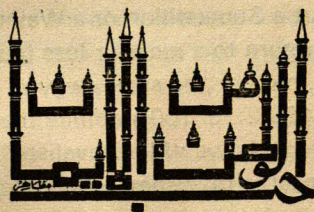
All this accords with Aristotle's dictum, that "the general end of art is the good of man." General ends take precedence of private ends; it is not the private good of this or that man, and still less of this or that artist, but Man's conception of the good, that has determined what was made by art. In principle, accordingly, a censorship can be approved of as altogether proper to the dignity of Man. This need not be a legally formulated censorship so long as the responsible artist is *also* a responsible member of society. But as soon as the artist asserts an absolute independence there arises the occasion for a formulated censorship; liberty becoming license, forges its own chains.

We must not however overlook a factor essential to the current problem. Who is qualified to be a censor? Surely it is not enough to recognize a wrong or what we think a wrong, and to rush into action guided only by a private, or little group, opinion, however firmly entertained. It is certainly not in a democracy, nor in a society trying to find a means of survival by trial and error, that a censorship can be justly exercised. Our censorships reflect at the best a variable canon of expediency; one that varies, for example, from state to state and decade to decade. To justify the exercise of a censorship, we must *know* what is right or wrong, and why; we must have read Eternal Law before we can impose a human code. This means that it is only within a relatively unanimous community acknowledging an ascertained truth, that a censorship can properly be exercised, and only by an elite, whose vocation it is precisely to know metaphysical truth, (whence only can there be deduced and ascertained the governing principles of doing and making) that laws of conduct binding on the artist as a man can properly be promulgated. We cannot therefore expect from any legislative censorship an adjustment of the strained relations between the artist and the patron, producer and concerned with himself, the latter too unaware of man's real needs, whether physical or spiritual,—too much a lover of quantity and by far too little insistent upon the quality of life. The source of



all our difficulties, whether economic, or psychic, lies beyond the power of legislation or philanthropy; what we require is a rectification of humanity itself and a consequent awareness of the priority of contemplation to action. We are altogether too busy, and have made a vice of industry.

Under present circumstances, then, art is by and large a luxury; a luxury that few can afford, and one that need not be overmuch lamented by those who cannot afford to buy. This same "art" was once the principle of knowledge by which the means of life were produced, and the physical and spiritual needs of man were provided for. The whole man made by contemplation, and in making did not depart from himself. To resume all that has been said in a single statement,—Art *is* a superstition : art *was* a way of life.





# APPENDIX

## AKC'S REJOINDER\*

to a Review by Richard Florsheim

of

IS ART A SUPERSTITION OR A WAY OF LIFE ?

By

*Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*

( THE ART BULLETIN, XX, 126 f. )

In reviewing my "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?" Mr. Florsheim assumes my "advocacy of a return to a more or less feudal order . . . an earlier, but dead, order of things." In much the same way a reviewer of "Patron and Artist" ( cf. in Apollo, Feb., 1938. p. 100 ) admits that what I say "is all very true," but assumes that the remedy we "Mediaevalists" ( meaning such as Gill, Gleizes, Carey and me ) suggest is to "somehow get back to an earlier social organization."

These false, facile assumptions enable the critic to evade the challenge of our criticism, which has two main points: (1) that the current "appreciation" of ancient or exotic arts in terms of our own very special and historically provincial view of art amounts to a sort of hocus pocus, and (2) that under the conditions of manufacture taken for granted in current artistic doctrine man is given stones for bread. These propositions are either true or not, and cannot honestly be twisted to mean that we want to put back the hands of the clock.

Neither is it true that we "do not pretend to offer much in the way of practical remedy;" on the contrary, we offer everything, that is to "somehow get back to first principles." Translated from metaphysical into religious terms this means "Seek first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." What this can have to do with a sociological archaism or eclecticism I fail to see.

A return to first principles would not recreate the outward aspects of the Middle Ages, though it might enable us to better understand these aspects.

---

\* Published in the Art Bulletin, XX, (1938) 443.





I have nowhere said that I wished to "return to the Middle Ages." In the pamphlet reviewed I said that a cathedral was no more beautiful in kind than a telephone booth in kind, and expressly excluded questions of preference, i. e. of "wishful thinking." What I understand by "wishful thinking" (cf. p.2 of my essay) is that kind of faith in "progress" which leads Mr. Florsheim to identify "earlier" with "dead", a type of thinking that ignores all distinction of essence from accident and seems to suggest a Marxist or at any rate a definitely anti-traditional bias.

Things that were true in the Middle Ages are still true, apart from any questions of styles; suppose it is eternally true, for example, that "beauty has to do with cognition." Does it follow from this that in order to be consistent, I must decorate my house with crockets? or am I forbidden to admire an aeroplane? Dr. Wackernagel, reviewed in THE ART BULLETIN, XX, p.23, "warns against the lack of purpose in most of our modern art." Need this imply a nostalgia for the Middle Ages on his part? If I assert that a manufacture by art is humanely speaking superior to an "industry without art," it does not follow that I envisage knights in armor. If I see that manufacture for use is better for the consumer (and we are all consumers) than a manufacture for profit, this has nothing to do with **what** should be manufactured. If I accept that vocation is the natural basis of individual progress (the word has a real meaning in an individual application, the meaning namely of **werden was du bist**), I am not necessarily wrong merely because this position was "earlier" maintained by Plato and in the Bhagavad Gita. I do not in fact pretend to foresee the style of a future Utopia; however little may be the value I attach to "modern civilisation," however much higher may have been the prevalent values of the medieval or any other early or still existing social order, I do not think of any of these as providing a ready made blueprint for future imitation. I have no use for pseudo-Gothic in any sense of the word. The sooner my critics realise this, and that I am not out to express any views, opinions or philosophy of my "own", the sooner will they find out what I am talking about.





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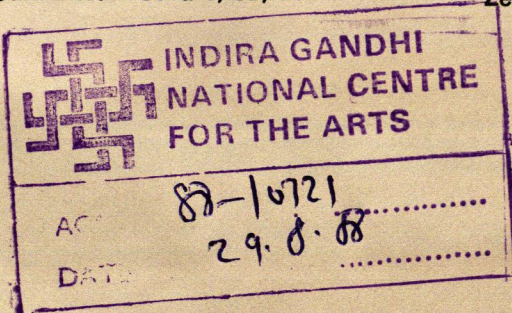
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## SYMBOLISM OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

(The Skambha & The Stūpa)

by

A. K. Coomaraswamy

The HRD Programme Jaipur, 1984

20" × 30" = 8 (18 cms × 24 cms)

Pp. viii+80 Full Cloth-bound Price Rs. 80/-

This is one of his rarest classics on Indian Art History, dealing with the vertically rising 'Skambha' (Pillar) and the spherically spreading 'Stūpa', the two basic constituents of Indian Architecture. He defines their symbolism which went into the making of their art through the ages, beginning with the Rgvedic period. Without this symbolism, e.g. Architectural Representation of the World Creation, or the 'Ekastambha' (Unitary Pillar) representation of the world sustenance through the Sun's daily journey, the traditional Indian arts have no meaning.

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Vol. II

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